

ELECTRELANE

LIFESAVALAS

MAVADO & AIDONIA

OF MONTREAL

CLIPD BEAKS

MARS-1

XLRRRR

107
MAY
2007

ACCELERATING MUSIC AND CULTURE

SLEEP- hit

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Matthew Dear
on his surprisingly
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Electrelane photographed by Debbie Bragg



PUMA by MIHARAYASUHIRO



ED'S RANT
HOT TO TROT



Brianna interviews SXSW reveler Jonny for *XLR8R TV*.

Since the first chirp of spring, it's been nothing but running around for us *XLR8R*ers. First stop: Austin's SXSW, whose highlights included poking around Cadence Weapon's and Panthers' hotel rooms for *XLR8R TV* (see the footage at revision3.com/xlr8rtv), getting down to some real Houston-style R&B, drunken crooning in taxicabs, and basking in the glow of Jesu's Justin Broadrick.

Next stop, Miami. Rain dampened daytime events, but the endurance test raged on, with underground house stars Dixon, Jesse Rose, and Claude Von Stroke throwing it down, So-Me and Parra giving the entire Ed Banger Records posse drunken Sharpie tattoos at Studio A, and a Stones Throw party so live–Madlib DJing, Jaguar Wright on the mic–that everyone from Waajeed to JT Donaldson to Steve Aoki wanted in on the act.

Apocalypse Wow columnist Roy Dank was in LA and SF, where he played a wacked-out warehouse all-nighter with Maurice Fulton. Publisher Andrew Smith hightailed it to Las Vegas for the Magic clothing convention, hooking up with our favorite brands and photographing all the dope fall stuff for our Elements page.

We're not the only ones traversing time zones. Jesse Serwer doggedly pursued dancehall gangster Mavado, at one point leaving a message with his neighbor (and selector), Foota Hype. Portland, San Francisco, the Midwest, and Miami were all involved in superstar techno scribe Philip Sherburne linking up for some "face time" with superstar techno producer Matthew Dear. Sherburne had hours of afterhours hang-outs with Dear to pull from, but had to wrack his brain to remember all the anecdotes while in the midst of Winter Music Conference madness.

Sometimes, though, we make artists do the work for us. Our favorite freak-out-ists Clipd Beaks embarked on an epic journey—a self-booked, 30-date tour of the US—and documented the wild first leg for us in collage form. I went to dinner with Get Physical's Booka Shade and their manager and then sprung a surprise battery of questions about German New Wave on them for the Neue Deutsche Welle piece. For a while, we've wondered what goes into making edits and dance rock remixes, so we called up Pilooski and A Touch of Class and asked them. And a crop of new books on classic graffiti made us question where the culture is going, landing me on the phone with graff experts (and fellow magazine editors) Roger Gastman of *Swindle*, Dan Murphy of *Megawords*, and Sasha Jenkins of *Ego Trip/Mass Appeal*.

Hope you enjoy traveling through this month's issue, but all this trotting has made us tired. I'll have an eye pillow and an Aleve, and I'll see *you* in the morning.

—Vivian Host, Editor

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Matthew Dear photographed by Doug Coombe



PUMA by MIHARAYASUHIRO



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Doug with Jack White. Photo by Jack

DOUG COOMBE

Doug Coombe is an Ann Arbor-based freelance photographer who has worked for Detroit's *Metro Times* for 10 years. For this issue, he shot cover star Matthew Dear on location in Michigan. Doug's interiors of abandoned Detroit architecture appeared in *D Troit* at Gigantic Art Space in New York in 2003, and at Urbis in Manchester in 2004. You can see his work in *The Wire*, *MOJO*, *Spin*, *Rolling Stone*, *Remix*, *XXL*, *NME*, and *RES*.



JESSE SERWER

XLR8R's Brooklyn-based hip-hop columnist Jesse "Orosco" Serwer isn't all about rap—he was once the drummer for Kraut-pop trio Gym Class, and an editor at a corporate business magazine. But it's di riddims that have his attention these days. After witnessing the hype surrounding hotly tipped dancehall deejays Aidonia and Mavado while in Kingston last year, Jesse sought out the two rivals to get their sides of the ever-evolving battle for this month's feature "The Warriors." See his work in *XXL*, *Wax Poetics*, and *Time Out New York*.

www.jesseorosco.com



MATTHIAS MARX

Dresden, Germany-based designer Matthias Marx has a fair share of aliases: Mr. Trend, Rex Diamond, The Light, Edge Globe, Dr. Buy Da Greul, Win!, Mr. Man, The Foo-Hunter, and Just Eat have all have made the cut at one time or another. Marx illustrated this month's Jahtari Audiofile, and currently does font design, illustration, and artwork for Wildsmile Studios and superideal.biz, while keeping side-projects like the International Sticker Awards (with Gruppe Ideal) on the go.



PHILIP SHERBURNE

Philip is currently living the glamorous life, jetting between small-town Barcelona, Spain and the cosmopolitan metropolis of Portland, Oregon. For this issue, he interviewed Matthew Dear in Portland, Miami, and S.F. "I'm making his wife jealous," he jokes. Having spent so much time at Dear's side, Philip claims to "know what records Matt's gonna play even before *he* does." Philip's work can be seen in Pitchfork Media, *The Wire*, Earplug, and, of course, *XLR8R*.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Got something to say? Love us? Hate us? Write us at letters@xlr8r.com or send mail to *XLR8R* Magazine, 1388 Haight Street #105, San Francisco CA 94117.



March Issue #105



April Issue #106

XLR8R, I Love You But You're Bringing Me Down

Wow, James Murphy in the studio [#105; "In the Studio: LCD Soundsystem"]. Hmm... couldn't have predicted *that* one. The bandwagon is riding a bit crooked these days—might wanna jump off, *XLR8R*.

Rick Regan, via the web

Up in Smoke

Hey,
I'm writing in regards to the Jan/Feb [#104] issue. I am used to seeing the truth.com ads in the magazine, but was shocked to turn the page and see an ad for cigarettes! I felt betrayed. How could a magazine that is so adamant against smoking advertise cigarettes?
Thanks,
Brett Ashley, via the web

Andrew responds: That's a good question, and it brings about an interesting debate because The Truth's ads aren't actually anti-smoking, although that's how they appear to most readers. The campaign is a result of a settlement for a lawsuit alleging that cigarette advertising is misleading. The Truth is more accurately a campaign for truth in advertising, therefore we didn't see a conflict of interest.

Battle Lines Are Being Drawn

I find it cool that you guys occasionally cover indie bands, and Battles are decent and all, but this new record kind of licks BALLZ. Just wanted you to know, since you've got them on your new cover [#106; Sleight of Hand]. The new Modest Mouse and Ted Leo discs, rule, though.

Jeff, via the web

Plugged Up

Props, *XLR8R* and Toph One! Big ups on our review this issue! Stay up! Cop the LP!
Atarilogic and Alaska Westwind, via MySpace

Sister Act

Kid Sister is one fly girl, and I thank you for featuring her in the mag last time [#106; So Damn Fresh]. She better dump A-Trak and get with some of this! Still, you rock.

David Koontz, via the web

In issue #106's "So Damn Fresh" piece, we erroneously stated that rapper Pase Rock is from Philly. He is from NYC.



XLR8R'S "FROM SCRATCH" CONTEST

Be the first to get your hands on Native Instruments Traktor Scratch and a whole lotta CDs.

The *XLR8R* crew has been flapping its wings all over this godforsaken land lately, either shooting video for *XLR8R TV* and getting wrecked southern style at Austin's South by Southwest, or hitting the poolside at WMC in Miami. We're getting pretty good at packing light, and Native Instruments' new **Traktor Scratch** software is helping. Traktor Scratch lets you pack all the latest tracks onto your laptop and let them rip in the club without hauling along 80 lbs of back-breaking wax. Featuring the **AUDIO 8** hardware interface, which connects your hard drive to your turntables or other digital controllers, Traktor Scratch combines the ease and confidence of vinyl manipulation with the potential of the digital world. Need more digital? How about CD copies of some of *XLR8R*'s favorite new discs like **Cadence Weapon's** *Breaking Kayfabe* (Upper Class), **A Touch of Class' A Touch of Class Still Sucks!** (ATOC), **J Dilla's Ruff Draft** (Stones Throw), and **Dntel's Dumb Luck** (Sub Pop).

All you have to do is tell us, in 50 words or less, which two artists you'd love to see remixing one another, and why. The craziest (or maybe the most sensible, who knows?) answer wins the prizes below.

ONE GRAND-PRIZE WINNER RECEIVES: A Native Instruments Traktor Scratch/AUDIO 8 gear package and each of the CDs listed above.

THREE RUNNERS-UP WILL RECEIVE: A copy of each of the CDs listed.

Entries will be accepted via standard mail and email. Entries must be received by June 12, 2007. Send your answers to *XLR8R*'s "From Scratch" Contest, 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email contest@xlr8r.com with "*XLR8R*'s From Scratch Contest" in the subject line.



www.stonesthrow.com, www.upperclass.to, www.atouchofclassusa.com, www.native-instruments.com

"CULTURE CLASH" CONTEST WINNERS

We asked readers to recreate their favorite album covers. Here are the winning submissions.



GRAND-PRIZE WINNER: David Walker recreated Duran Duran's *Rio*



FIRST RUNNER-UP:
Marc Dee recreated Black Dice's *Broken Ear Record* (two versions)



SECOND RUNNER-UP:
LL McCarty recreated Black Grape's *It's Great When You're Straight... Yeah*

BITTER BASTARD'S TOP 10 THINGS KEEPING DANCE MUSIC IN THE DARK AGES

Behold! A smattering of the most unnecessary things in club culture, courtesy of your dancefloor watchdog, BJ “Bitter” Bastard.



1. Topless female DJs We just got sent this email from a dude who represents “topless female DJs” and it didn’t even say their DJ names or anything about them as people, except that they played trance, house, and electro. I want to make a joke about this but it’s hard to do while I’m barfing in my mouth. One small step for boners, one big giant leap backwards for all humankind.

2. Clubbing awards Imagine a super-low-budget version of the Grammys, where Deep Dish and Sasha win 20 things and everyone thinks they’re balling in white suits like it’s fucking *Miami Vice*. These events might be halfway interesting if there were awards for “Most Bridge & Tunnel Club” or “DJ With the Biggest God Complex” or “Best DJ-High-on-Drugs Antics,” but, um, there’s not, because everyone involved takes themselves way too seriously.

3. Specialty dance clothing You don’t need special clothes and products for dancing—jeans and t-shirts have worked for people for years. Oh, and spandex. Lots and lots of spandex.

4. “Top 100 DJ” lists Has anyone ever read one of these things and thought ‘Goddamn, they really nailed it!’? But hey, 4,000 guidos in New Jersey who voted for Chris “The Greek” Panaghi can’t be wrong... Can they?

5. One-sided 12” records Let me get this straight: I pay \$12 for an import, and you can’t even be bothered to put a remix—hell, even a dub—on the flipside. Not even one of those nifty etchings of your label logo. Damn, you are lazy. What’s worse, I got duped.

6. “Lounge” compilations I like “lounging” as much as the next bastard, but I really don’t want my apartment to feel like some nonde-script *Wallpaper* magazine bar where no one



cares about the music, the drinks cost \$14, and it looks like a scene from *Swingers*. After I see legitimately good artists on a comp like this it kind of makes me suspect of them forever after.

7. Clubs with more than four rooms Even in clubs with three rooms we feel disoriented. But five and six rooms? That’s just cruel to the DJs, since the crowd spends all night pushing back and forth convinced that they’re missing something somewhere else. It’s like going to Disneyland, but without the fun part.

8. Red Bull and water We’re supposed to stay in the club until 4 a.m., not do drugs anywhere, and water costs basically the same price as a cocktail? On that note, how have they not figured out a way to make Red Bull cost less than \$8? I’m considering taking out a loan to support my nasty hydration habit.

9. Celebrity DJs If you’re going to have someone like Tommy Lee or Lindsay Lohan DJ at your party don’t call it a club, or anything that would make people think that it’s about dancing and/or having a good time. And don’t even get us started on Danny Masterson from *That ’70s Show*. He used to be called DJ DonkeyPunch but one day he found out what that meant, so he changed his name to “DJ Mom Jeans.” So hot.

10. Turntables that aren’t on tables If the DJ booth is perched up on a pedestal in the middle of the room, with the turntables suspended by a series of chains, guy-wires, or rubber belts, or balanced precariously on some wobbly-ass “stabilizing deck,” just turn and walk away.



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JAHTARI

FROM A FLAT IN LEIPZIG,
DISRUPT MAKES DUB
BRAND NEW AGAIN.

At its simplest, Jahtari is a web label dedicated to digital laptop reggae. It's hyper-modern dub music, an attempt to do something with the genre that hasn't been done before while still keeping the bass at the center and the accent on the offbeats. Artists build tracks from bare bones, keeping in mind "dramaturgical flow"—meaning every bar should make sense and have a purpose. This translates to instrumental reggae-dancehall that calls to mind the playful and weirdly flat beats of the '80s Sleng Teng era, with riddims double-dipped in King Tubby's organic echo chamber and the digital tweaks and glitches of modern German dub technicians like Pole.

At the heart of the Jahtari maelstrom lies one of the music's kindest and gentlest souls, Jan Gleichmar; he runs the entire operation from his flat in Leipzig, Germany, and produces over half of the tunes released on the label under the name Disrupt. By day, the worldly Gleichmar records sound for a German documentary crew covering the Middle East and India. He's also a certifiable film buff, a trait reflected in his tunes, where snippets from Bollywood movies and sci-fi flicks get dubbed out alongside forgotten videogame samples from your past.

"The idea is to have set limits on the equipment and to work within these boundaries," says Gleichmar, pulling a drag from his ever-present cigarette. "A track should work first and above all because it contains fine and unique ideas and surprises."

His philosophy has attracted a slew of like-minded artists who fill out the Jahtari roster, such as California's Blue Vitriol (check out their ambient-influenced *They Went to Titan* EP) and Denmark's Bo Marley, who dubs out vintage synths and live instruments. Even Disrupt's neighbors from up the street are in on the act, with Illyah producing analog-heavy sounds to back the wistful crooning of chanteuse Ltd. Candy. Influential Jamaican vocalists like Mikey Murka and African Simba also lend their talents to Jahtari's wildly psychedelic catalog, which is pushing 25 net-only releases (all available for free).

Disrupt's sound has grabbed the attention of London's Werk Discs, who released a slew of Disrupt tunes, including a single, a full-length called *Foundation Bit?* (complete with a bonus 7-inch), and a series of four 10"s with album tracks and exclusives. "I've heard lots of artists messing around with dub, trying to add their own flavor," explains Werk label boss Darren Cunningham. "For me, Jan really demonstrates a true understanding of the history, techniques, and construction of beats attributed to proper dub, whilst adding his own digital interpretations."

Jahtari has also expanded into the physical world. A label best-of CD compilation, *Jahtarian Dubbers Vol. 1*, is out now and a vinyl EP from Julien Neto (as John Frum) is coming soon. In the meantime, grab a game controller, light a spliff, and find all the 8-bit dub you'll ever need on the Jahtari website.

Jahtarian Dubbers Vol. 1 is out now, and a vinyl EP from Julien Neto. www.jahtari.org

TOUR DIARY: CLIPD BEAKS
Bird is the word for Tigerbeat6's acid-damaged analog-synth punks.

TOUR DIARY: CLIPD BEARS
Bird is the word for Tigerbeat6's acid-damaged analog-synth punks.

First things first: a quick and dirty repair of Greg's keyboard. Though only half the keys still work, it is deemed "giggable". After sampling local delicacies such as Rainier and Olympia, our jam ascends a majestic peak of noise. Deafened after the show, we mishear a friend talking about Jack in the Box and inadvertently invent the "Chicken Chewbacca Sandwich" (a Wookiee foot on a roll).

We arrive at our friends' house and they're playing *Guitar Hero*, surrounded by copious amounts of BC's most famous export. The party is at a rehearsal space in a seedy part of the city and appears to be a scene from *NARC* come to life. We crank up the volume and fire up the strobes. When the lights come on, the room has been cleared of hipsters. Only the freaks remain, dancing in the wreckage.

Tube is a little slice of NASA-style futuristic design in a quiet and unassuming area of aging brick warehouses. We score some medical cannabis from a friendly vampire and put an eyedropper to creative use. Later, we have a seance with a furry feline named Gabby. Around 3 a.m., a passer-by asks us, "Hey, is that cat on acid?" It's time to go home.

DJ Kyle warms up the crowd with some Scatman John and P.M. Dawn as we prepare to set things adrift. We've never had a bad show in L.A. and this one is no exception. Sean Carnage dubs us a "classic rock" band, meaning all those hours we spent studying Jane's Addiction videos on YouTube have finally paid off. The crowd goes crazy for openers Anavan, then we request some Cassie and all get our freak on to the "Me N U" club mix.

The party is in the backyard of a huge house. Lesbian's gear is arranged pristinely, resembling a music-video set, and we wonder how the neighbors will withstand the psychedelic metal fury. Once the sun sets, we break the heshers off with some thrashin' tunes. A guy named Freedom says we reminded him of Soundgarden, while a guy named Tomatoes asks if we are planning to have sex with random strangers while on tour. We politely explain that 3/4 of us are spoken for.

Clipd Beaks at the San Diego pier (from left):
Scott Ecklein, Ray Benjamin, Nic Barbeln, Greg Pritchard

Words Ken Taylor
Photo Pedersen



CADENCE WEAPON

FROM THE FROZEN NORTH COME RHYTHMS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD.

In the rap world, Rolie Pemberton's days are numbered—at least, that's what he thinks. "Nas was 18 when *Illmatic* came out," says the 21-year-old emphatically on the phone from his home in Edmonton, Alberta. "And think about sports nowadays... there are, like, 17-year-olds in the NBA." But sports guys peak before 30, and artists mature late into life, don't they? "That's accurate for every genre except rap," Pemberton fires back with wise-beyond-his-years wit.

Truth is, while MCs from Compton to Queensbridge might base entire careers on their plight to stay alive, surviving the Canadian rap game can be pretty damn grueling, too. It's not guns that plague hip-hop in the great white north—tenuous underground distribution networks, clueless record execs in the Toronto wings of major

labels, and having to shake a wannabe-gangsta image are fences that have guarded Canadians' success south of the border.

Cadence Weapon's time has come. It's been over two years since sites like Fluxblog began sharing "Sharks," Pemberton's shit-talking pre-emptive strike on Pitchfork Media, a website for whom he penned a number of reviews as a budding music journalist. Word about the young rapper's off-kilter rhyming and beat-making style, more akin to Del or Antipop Consortium than Hot 97 hit makers, spread quickly. Then came a signing to Toronto indie-rock label Upper Class, who issued his *Breaking Kayfabe* debut in Canada. Most recently, he signed to Anti-/Epitaph, who will release his follow-up, *Afterparty Babies*, this fall.

The term "breaking kayfabe" is stage lingo for breaking character and letting the truth reveal itself; in Pemberton's case, that translates to trading in rap's fake promise of money and fame for real stories from the cold, desolate Albertan capital. Yet despite some very Edmonton-centric rhymes—such as "Oliver Square," an ode to the strip mall where Pemberton worked his first fast-food job—the disc's minimal, early-Warp Records-inspired compositions have broad appeal while managing to chart new ground for bedroom rhyme-spitters. "I wanna make it so that 'Canadian rapper' is not a bad term," he says sincerely. "But I was never thinking, 'Oh, will people in Canada like this? Will people in the States like this?' I was thinking, 'Will *anyone* like this?'"

Two years later, I can't help but wonder how representative *Breaking Kayfabe* is of what's going on with Pemberton now.

"I wouldn't say it's worse, I'd say it's different... Some of the beats [on *Breaking Kayfabe*] go back as far as five years," he notes. But, as he later riddles off his current iPod favorites—Digitalism, Para One, Sebastian, Switch—one gets the feeling that he really is prepared to cover as much ground as possible before rap's dreaded three-oh. "[The new album] is a 100 percent departure. It's a dance record—that's all I'll say."

Breaking Kayfabe is out now on Upper Class Recordings. www.cadenceweaponmusic.com

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FOOT FORWARD

Japan's Mihara Yasuhiro designs futuristic sneakers with a message.

The last person whose style made an impression on Japanese designer Mihara Yasuhiro was an old lady he spotted in France. "She was walking down the street and her wig was off-center on her head," he explains, via an interpreter. "But somehow, it looked so cool."

As a designer, Yasuhiro's trademark *is* off-center design, apparel that remixes cultural cues to create new messages. He often explains that his work is about trying to "extend possibilities." His Spring/Summer 2007 collection for Puma, his fourteenth for the sneaker giant since 2000, is full of designs that reflect his ethos, blurring the lines between future and past, high-end and street fashion, reality and surreality. The MY-25—an '80s-styled gold metallic high-top—has rubber molding that recalls both the side of a DJ turntable and punk rockers' studded belts. The MY-23 features a sole and upper that appear to be melting into one another, while the MY-1

Peace, like many Yasuhiro designs, has an inspirational feeling, combining a pattern of stars and stripes with cloud embroidery to create a riot of color and texture. An equal amount of attention has been paid to the soles of the shoes. "I like it when people leave original footsteps behind," says Yasuhiro with a sly smile.

"I always design things to be launched two years in the future," Yasuhiro, 34, explains of his wild creations. "You have to create what people will want to have, instead of what they have now. People always ask me if I have a muse, but I don't design with one person in mind. I like people who challenge themselves and push things further. That's the person I would like to see wearing my sneakers." *Tyra Bangs*

The limited-edition *Puma by Mihara Yasuhiro* collectors book is available now at Colette in Paris and Alife Rivington Club in New York. mihara.puma.com



FIVE STAR: OF MONTREAL'S KEVIN BARNES
The indie-glam-pop phenomenon pays tribute to his top five electronic influences.

On Of Montreal's "My British Tour Diary," from the Athens, GA-based psych-pop band's 2004 album, *Satanic Panic in the Attic*, frontman Kevin Barnes complains about London cab drivers playing "the most truly repellant techno music ever made." But it's clear from the crooked beats, wild synths, and disco rhythms that permeate Of Montreal's latest opus,

Hissing Fauna, Are You the Destroyer?, that Barnes has got plenty of love for techno's founding fathers. Here, he waxes poetic on the electronic music pioneers who have influenced his sound. *Ken Taylor Hissing Fauna, Are You the Destroyer?* (Polyvinyl) is out now. www.ofmontreal.net



1. BRIAN ENO
The culture god's godfather of ambient music. The flaming beast of the glam art scene. The wet nightmare for the bourgeoisie. The totem animal for all who care about keeping the heart in the head. The gilded-feather altar from which freaky high births occur at random.



2. PIERRE HENRY
Creaking-door effect to the pantomime of modern ages. Soul brother to pedantic subverters. Gift of wisdom for nocturnal plasmic creatures. Saline wafer disturber for virgin palettes and, what's more, a lot of fun to try and dance to. Ageless, raceless, sexless.



3. RAYMOND SCOTT
Un-insane genius. Inventor of glass frequencies that can't be operatically destroyed by hairy sub-evolutionists. Friend to the womb and casket. Comrade to the illiterate meditation rooms populated by demi-glacé mustache designers and anti-depressant children of no age.



4. ARNOLD DREYBLATT
Hyperactive, bounceable, anti-gravity, trampoline, parachute salvation music. The sound of moondog alien anxieties and reverse-pale-fantasy labyrinths. Grey pleasures and honed lotion solutions to improper dilemmas. Hero to the calm water sensitives and bathers of Olympia.



5. LA MONTE YOUNG
A post-thought genius of Duchampian glory. Non-Mormon Fluxus celebrations depriving the growling beast nature of its poison. Drones that deliver the message of the unending shattering and reformation of an untouchably cosmic salvation.



Words Stacey Dugan
Photo Craig Wetherby

SANTOGOLD

SANTI WHITE FLIPS OFF POP STARDOM FOR POST-PUNK PEACOCKING.

Santi White's been kicking around the realms of middle-stardom for years, working on projects that hinted at—but never realized—her full potential.

At least hers has been a fun tale to tell. Interviews have highlighted her impassioned views on racial pigeonholing in the music industry (informed by her A&R work in Sony's urban music department) and her years fronting Philadelphia post-punk act Stiffed. She's also got some wizard-behind-the-curtain cred: She was instrumental in writing R&B artist Res' 2001 debut album, *How I Do* (MCA), and you can hear her vocals behind Lily Allen on "Littlest Things" and in the taunting refrain of Spank Rock's "Lindsay Lohan's Revenge."

This year, White is unabashedly sauntering center-stage. She and former Stiffed member John Hill have formed Santogold, a project easier to define by what it isn't than what it is. First and foremost, it's not what record label Lizard King—

an upstart led by the A&R exec who discovered The Killers—had in mind.

Initially, under the guise of an EP deal, the label paired White with pop producer Johnny "Most" Davis, who's worked with Pink, TLC, and Diddy. "That did not work out," laughs White, whose girlish sincerity lets her pull off even the bluntest criticisms. "It was a fight for [the label] to leave me and John [Hill] alone. I'm a fighter, so there was lots of yelling involved, and after we had a little bit of time and a little bit of space, and they heard the first demos, they left us alone for the rest of the time."

Their debut, *I Believe in Santogold*, hinges its sound on reggae but teeter-totters to the extremes of new wave and heavy dub. The sinister, futuristic "Creator vs. FreqNasty" unravels as slowly as a Caribbean afternoon, moved by a single hollow, elastic drum line and the swirling repetition of the "game over" sound on your game console. Distorted ska guitar

arpeggios and minor chords form the skeleton of "You'll Find a Way," which explodes with crisp choral riffs and explosive drum patterns.

White dips in and out of vocal styles as well. "I'm like a blend of Sister Carol and Khia—you know, from the 'My Neck, My Back' song," she says, referring to the way she peacocks a haughty dancehall sing-speak ("Creator vs. FreqNasty") one minute and a razor-sharp melodic wail ("L.E.S. Artistes") the next.

"John [Hill] and I set out to make a record of lots of different influences," she explains. "I get so tired of listening to records [where], by the end, you never really need to listen to it again because pretty much you listened to the same song for 14 tracks.

"In the past couple years I've met a bunch of artists who are moved by the same sort of creative energy," White continues. "I'm just really excited that there are people of color making music that's not stuck in some little box."

Santogold's *I Believe in Santogold* is out this month on Lizard King. www.myspace.com/santogold



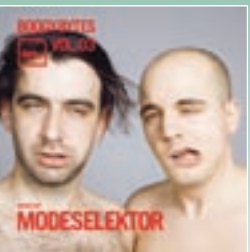
KAMMERFLIMMER KOLLEKTIEF
Jinx CD/LP

Germany's **Kammerflimmer Kollektief** are now paired down to three original core members. Continuing their exploration into ambient experimental electro-jazz led them to new ground: a laid-back pop rhythm that sounds like the sediment of the band's earlier approach. Join the expedition.



CHRIS TIETJEN
Zwei CD

The best of the current Cocoon releases, compiled and mixed by CocoonClub's Next Generation host, **Chris Tietjen**. Tietjen is one of Cocoon's foremost ambassadors who is capable of burning the Cocoon vibe and transporting the Frankfurt mood to your head. Including **Gerber**, **Eulberg**, **Loco Dice**, **Fuckaponydelic**, and many more.



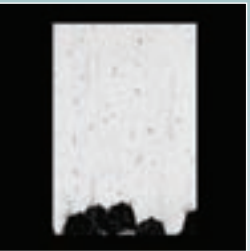
MODESELEKTOR
Boogy Bytes Vol. 03 CD

Modeselektor's first official DJ-mix is a ride through various arenas of electronic dance music, pimped by the finest hip-hop. Almost 30 disparate tracks mixed so smoothly only these masters of euphoria could have done it. **Burial**, **Nathan Fake**, and **Paul Kalkbrenner** touch **Spank Rock** and **Radiohead**. *XLRR* thinks it "will keep you guessing, not to mention dancing."



PHILIPP QUEHENBERGER
Phantom In Paradise CD

Vienna-based **Phillip Quehenberger**'s long awaited full-length debut brings further furtherance to Editions Mego (what the Mego label has morphed into). *Phantom In Paradise* captivates with intelligent dancefloor confusions, hypnotic maelstroms and darkly gleaming pop. This is dance-heavy pop-eclecticism NOW.



EFDEMIN
Efdemin CD/2LP

Efdemin's (aka **Phillip Sollmann**) *Bergwein 12*" became an underground summer anthem in '06, and his remixes and tracks have already made their way into the record bags of DJs like **Laurent Garnier**, **Steve Bug** & **Shinedoe**. His debut full-length epitomizes the Dial sound: spacious tech-house for the home or the club.



GUDRUN GUT
I Put a Record On CD/LP

Can you believe this is **Gudrun Gut**'s first solo album? One of the key founders of **Einstürzende Neubauten** and **Malaria!**, to Moabit and Monika Enterprise label-head, she has done it all. "Gut produces a culmination of everything her history would suggest, and more." -*XLRR*



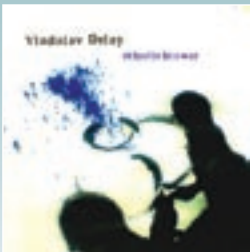
STEVE BUG
Fuse Presents Steve Bug CD

Steve Bug is one of the founding fathers and true icons of minimal techno next to **Richie** and **Ricardo**, and runs the highly acclaimed Poker Flat label. This is the new onrush in the top notch *Fuse Presents* series already featuring well received mix CDs from **Dave Clarke** and **DJ Hell**, amongst others. Classics from **Johnny Dangerous** and **Rhythm Is Rhythm**, future anthems by **Move D** and **Efdemin**, and more.



OPTIMO
Walkabout CD

Massive first release for the Endless Flight label (a new Mule Musiq offshoot) by **Optimo**, whose first mix CD grabbed a 9.0 on *Pitchfork* in 2005. Featuring **Thomas Brinkmann**, **Throbbing Gristle**, **Pan Sonic**, **Black Dice**, **Suicide**, **Grungerman**, **Boris**, and heaps more.



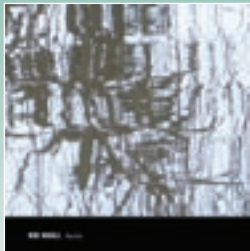
VLADISLAV DELAY
Whistleblower CD

Finland's **Vladislav Delay** (aka **Luomo**) one of the most enigmatic figures in the global electronic scene, returns to his Huume label for another icy excursion. Well-timed with the reissue of his now-classic minimal-dub-house second Luomo album *The Present Lover*, *Whistleblower* is for the morning-after reality check.



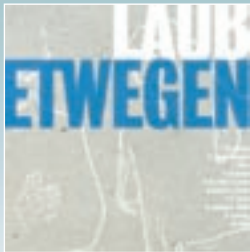
APPARAT
Walls CD

Fresh off touring the world in collaboration with **Ellen Allien**, **Apparat** returns with his first full-length solo release in 3 years. Combining tracks scrawled over the last few years and then melded together in this chameleonic laptop-pop heaven, *Walls* is a another leap for **Sascha Ring** and the Shitkatpult label.



KK NULL
Fertile CD

Japanese noise experientician **KK Null** releases his first full-length for Touch. Noise, ambience, broken-down rhythms and pitch sculptures abound. Null was the mastermind behind seminal noise group **Zeni Geva**, so you know he's got mad knowledge.



LAUB
Deinetwegen CD

Laub's fifth studio album and first in five years is a leap into a new world: 21st century post-techno glitch-blues. They don't sample old blues records, but re-imagine the territory, making the lyrical jump from Mississippi crossroads to Berlin's ultra-modern landscapes. *Deinetwegen* scrapes the asphalt in search of the digital beyond.



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fine independent record stores or online at www.forcedexposure.com
Retailers: request wholesale information from fe@forcedexposure.com



WHAT IS IT?: NEUE DEUTSCHE WELLE

Dadaism, irony, and electronic informed the torch-bearers of German New Wave.

Larry Tee and DJ Hell may have modernized the combination of irony, nihilism, and asymmetrical haircuts with synthesizers and drum machines, but they hardly invented it. They—along with artists like T. Raumschmiere, Alec Empire, and White Rose Movement—owe a stylistic debt to the Neue Deutsche Welle (New German Wave) scene of the late '70s and early '80s.

Like most post-punk and early New Wave acts, Neue Deutsche Welle bands were more linked by a common aesthetic than a particular sound. NDW borrowed from 1920s—echoing the Dada movement's pranksterism and anti-establishment sentiments and fetishizing the look of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*; bands also addressed the Cold War, whose symbols (from military uniforms to Mussolini) were often re-appropriated for kitsch value. Londoners did that too, but NDW's intentionally simplistic and quirky lyrics (rife with staccato German consonants) and hyper-minimalism, along with the band's actual proximity to the Berlin Wall, gave the music extra force.

Musically, the early Neue Deutsche Welle underground (from about 1976 to 1981) was art-damaged and proto-electronic, with **Abwärts**, **Malaria!**, and **Geisterfahrer** delivering angular, detuned dance-punk; **D.A.F.** (Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft) and **Liasons Dangereuses** putting out jerky proto-electro; and **Pyrolator** playing with tape loops and analog electronics. Industrial noise pioneers **Einstürzende**

Neubauten, who formed in 1980 out of a Berlin Dadaist collective known as Geniale Dilletanten, were also key catalysts.

By 1984, the scene had quickly expanded to include brooding, layered goth sounds from Switzerland's **Grauzone** and **X-Mal Deutschland** and minimal pop from **Ideal** and **Trio**. (If you were older than a sperm in the Me Decade, you've probably heard Trio's rudimentary 1982 hit "Da Da Da.") As with New Wave, larger labels eventually caught on, and by the mid-'80s Neue Deutsche Welle was used to describe **Falco** and **Nena**, and many other German pop acts with tenuous connections to the genre's punk roots.

Today in Berlin, you can go to "oldies" bars that only play pop Neue Deutsche Welle—a bit like going to bad '80s nights in the U.S. But the legacy of the NDW underground lives in on in other ways. Founding Neubauten and Malaria! member Gudrun Gut is extremely active in electronic music, and runs the Monika Enterprise label. German label Playhouse recently re-released the dark disco-y "Wunderbar" by junkie diva Christiane F. (a.k.a. Christiana), and multiple NDW artists (including Nena and Der Plan member Andreas Dorau) have received the remix treatment, courtesy of today's modern minimal techno stars. *Vivian Host* www.backagain.de, www.atatak.com, www.ichwillspass.de

GOOD STUFF

A few of Mama Clothing's favorite things.

Streetwear is definitely a boy's game, but there are just as many girls coveting all-over-print hoodies and crazy-colored high-tops. Enter 32-year-old Gabriella Davi-Khorasanee, who began filling the void in women's garms three years ago with Mama Clothing. This season, Mama's offering Mondrian-inspired and leopard-print tees, custom doorknocker earrings, and even a lace-print New Era just for the ladies. Davi-Khorasanee can often be seen around San Francisco, rocking Chanel shades and a white wife-beater, and hustling on one of her many projects, which also include a men's line called One Hit Wonder and an all-female posse known as M.I.S.S. Crew. We asked her what she can't live without. *Tyra Bangs*
www.mamaclothing.com



1. HELLO KITTY ROLLING SUITCASE (\$135)

I travel a bit for work and I always take my Hello Kitty carry-on with me. It's the perfect size to stow everything I need on a flight, including a laptop and pillow. Why carry the same boring black luggage that everyone else has? My model is a few years old but every year Sanrio releases a different version.

www.sanrio.com

2. ZIPPO BLACK CRACKLE LIGHTER (\$18.95)

What can I say? Everyone's got at least one bad habit. Zippos make the habit a little harder to break. From the unmistakable hinge click to the faint smell of lighter fluid, it's the best lighter ever. My little charm has black crackle—not only does it look amazing, it actually has some history to it. Because of the lack of raw materials during WWII, the lighters allocated to soldiers had a black coating to prevent rusting.

www.zippo.com

3. VIVIENNE WESTWOOD: 36 YEARS IN FASHION (\$35)

The Vivienne Westwood exhibit at San Francisco's de Young Museum (through June 10) is breathtaking. To see her pieces up close, and see the tremendous amount of detail that went into each garment, was such a great experience. It was also really interesting to see how her style changed, yet remained true to her ideals. If you can't see the show in person, this catalog is the second best thing.

www.deyoungmuseum.org



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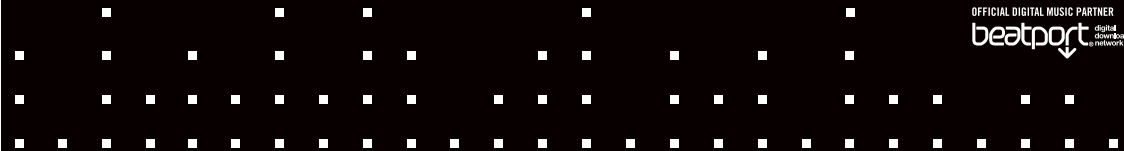
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AU REVOIR SIMONE

A BROOKLYN POP TRIO
TAKES IT FROM PEE-WEE
HERMAN TO DAVID LYNCH.

Au Revoir Simone’s Annie Hart is on the phone from a tour stop in Munich. She’s just finished sound-check and is stoked on her monitor mix. It’s a simple pleasure—but then again, simple pleasures are what Au Revoir Simone is all about. Since 2003, the Brooklyn trio—rounded out by fellow keyboardist/vocalists Heather D’Angelo and Erika Forster—has crafted infectious songs that display a fervent dedication to synthetic keyboard melodies. In other words, it’s been saccharine indie-pop fun from day one.

“We never said, ‘We’re gonna be a band and play shows and take over the world.’ We just wanted to go to Erika’s house to drink tea and play keyboards,” says Hart. “The big advancement was when we brought keyboard stands to practice.” Shortly after that, Foster’s keyboard teacher invited them to play a show, forcing them to come up with a name. Au Revoir Simone, taken from *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure*, struck a chord with all three members. “We thought that it sounded so romantic and beautiful, but it was actually really dorky,” she explains, “I think that’s a lot of what we exemplify.”

Two years later, Au Revoir Simone released their debut album, *Verses of Comfort, Assurance, and Salvation*, on their own label, Our Secret Record Company. (British label Moshi Moshi released the record in Europe.) The record caught the attention of ex-Talking Heads member David Byrne, who championed them on his online radio station; not long after, two songs were commissioned for *Grey’s Anatomy*. “It will sound kind of corny, but being on the show really gave my mom something to brag about,” Hart says.

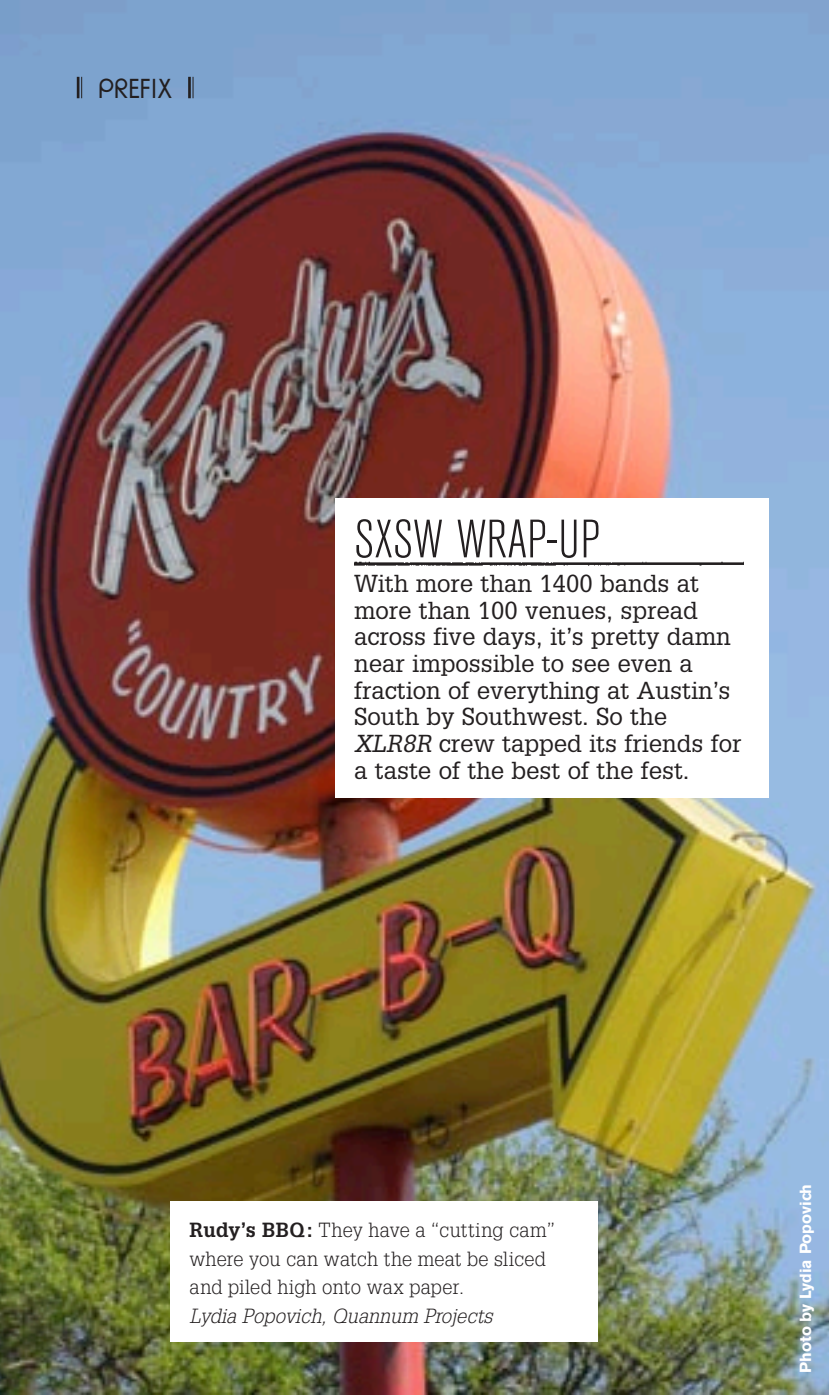
They’ve also made a fan of David Lynch, who met them at the opening for his book, *Catching the Big Fish*. (They were invited to play music while he read excerpts.) The *Blue Velvet* director was an instant fan, and later flew them to Paris for an art opening. “He invited us out for drinks in Paris, and we got along really well,” Hart quips. “So it’s weird to watch his movies and be like, ‘Whoa! Is that the same guy who’s a totally nice dude?’”

After hefty blog coverage and a premature leak on file-sharing networks, the girls’ second record, *The Bird of Music*, came out in March. But while huge anticipation usually leads to critical backlash, Hart’s insecurities lie elsewhere. “What I’m really nervous about is that someone’s going to make fun of the way I dance [on stage], because it’s really awkward,” she confesses. “I’m not looking forward to the day I read, ‘That girl’s totally spastic.’ I’m hoping nobody will notice.”

The Bird of Music is out now on Our Secret Record Company in the U.S., and Moshi Moshi in Europe. www.aurevoirsimone.com



Words Josiah Hughes
Photo Sarah Wilmer
Pictured Au Revoir Simone (from left): Erika Forster, Heather D’Angelo, Annie Hart



SXSW WRAP-UP
With more than 1400 bands at more than 100 venues, spread across five days, it's pretty damn near impossible to see even a fraction of everything at Austin's South by Southwest. So the *XLR8R* crew tapped its friends for a taste of the best of the fest.

Rudy's BBQ: They have a "cutting cam" where you can watch the meat be sliced and piled high onto wax paper.
Lydia Popovich, Quannum Projects

Photo by Lydia Popovich



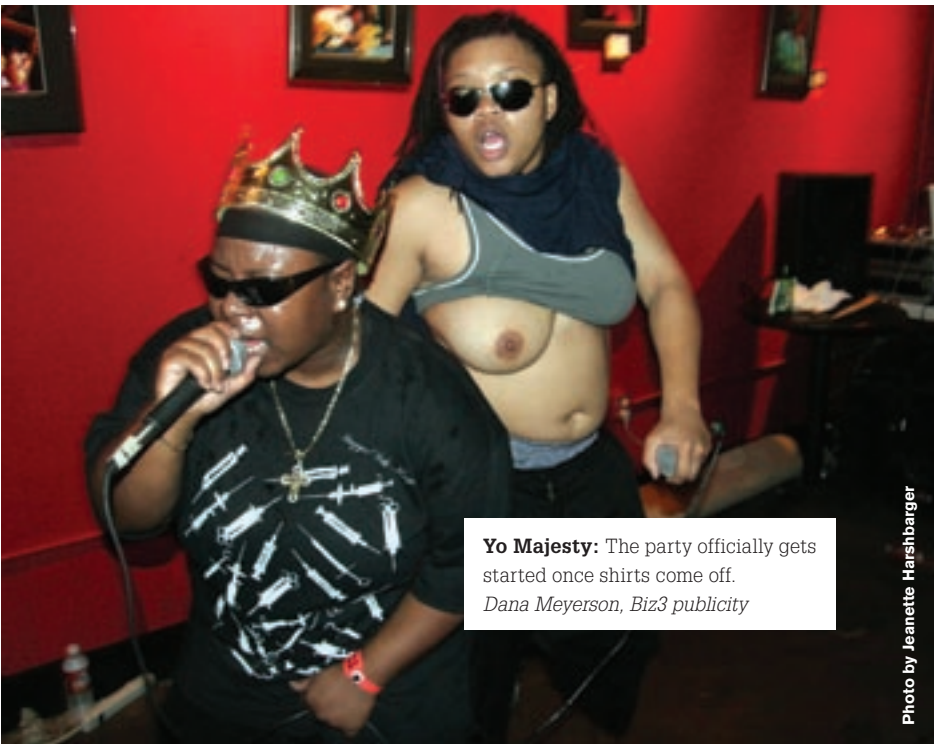
Federation, The Pack, and Saafir:
Livest show I've ever been to. Period.
Lydia Popovich, Quannum Projects

Photo by Lydia Popovich



The Good, The Bad and The Queen:
Exemplary of how every adult male should dress, drink, and swagger.
Marah Eakin, Touch and Go Records

Photo by Marah Eakin



Yo Majesty: The party officially gets started once shirts come off.
Dana Meyerson, Biz3 publicity

Photo by Jeanette Harshbarger



Monotonix: I'm surprised they didn't bring down the Flamingo Cantina in flames, literally!
Maria Catamero, Blue Ghost PR

Photo by Maria Catamero



Flatstock: Every year, the poster art portion of SXSW gets better and better.
Justin McNeal, Friends With Benefits



Girl Talk: One nerd with a laptop shouldn't be able to get that many bodies moving.
Angela Watercutter, Wired

Photo by Jeanette Harshbarger



Baltimore house party: Easily the best DIY party of the festival.
Jake Friedman, Lovepump United Records



Sabbath in the Park: 50 people + Sabbath on the boombox + corn whiskey
Mike Davis, Burlesque of North America

Photo by Ian Meyer



Fanatic Showcase Poster by Lil Tuffy



Houston Rap Style: Rapper K.B. (with HoustonSoReal's Matt Sonzala) brought the bling competition to a halt when he rolled up with his jewel-dripping snake. Go to www.xlr8r.com/peepshow to see more Houston style.
Brianna Pope, XLR8R

Words Patrick Sisson

Photo Constance Kostrevski

Pictured: Qualo (from left): Preast, Chicago Shawn, Shala Esquire, King Ken Winz



QUALO
A WINDY CITY
HIP-HOP
COLLECTIVE
IS BACKPACK,
GANGSTA, AND
EVERYTHING
IN BETWEEN.

The annual Chicago Rocks showcase, organized by the respected Molemen crew, has been a highlight of the city’s hip-hop calendar for years and Qualo made sure its appearance during the 2005 edition would be memorable. Waving a flag and flooding the stage with rappers, the group turned its set into a haphazard scene straight out of a political convention. It was an apt move for Qualo, a quartet who are definitely rap’s dark-horse candidate.

“We’re from Chicago and we bring the truth,” says group member Shala Esquire. “We’re more rooted in reality. There’s a dark, bluesy sentiment to our music. It’s never corny.”

Qualo started taking shape when the group’s four members—Preast, Chicago Shawn, Shala Esquire, and King Ken Winz—met and began performing at Chicago’s Lane Technical High School. Progressing organically from campus freestyle sessions in the school cafeteria,

the group solidified and started cutting records (they all share production duties). A wide range of influences, from Led Zeppelin and A Tribe Called Quest to local rappers like Psychodrama and Crucial Conflict, informed the group’s polyglot approach to putting together beats and rhymes. With lyrics spanning sarcastic political satires and street-heavy screeds, Qualo has a diverse style sometimes compared to that of OutKast, particularly the duality of that duo’s approach.

“If you notice, Big Boi and Andre could never get along if there wasn’t a little Big Boi in Andre and Andre in Big Boi,” said Shala Esquire. “We don’t have one thing, either. People aren’t just backpack or gangsta.”

The group started gaining wider attention with their self-released 2004 album *Believe*—which earned a stellar review from that *other* Chicago institution, *Playboy*—and continued to make noise on the mixtape circuit with CDs like *Only*

in America, which contained the dead-on genre parody “Crack.” Signed to Universal, Qualo expects to drop a full-length later this year. In the meantime, they’re working on solo albums (like Chicago Shawn’s forthcoming reggae disc), collaborating with artists like Low B of Hollertronix, and strengthening “The Movement”—a loose term they apply to friends, fans, and fellow artists from Chicago

“We want to be known as a group that makes music and just happens to rap,” Esquire explains. “People put us in boxes. When they can’t package and corner you, they don’t know what to do with you. I think the era we just left in rap, there was a lot of pandering. We’re the new sentiment of what rap started from: rebellious and breaking the norm.”

www.myspace.com/qualo, www.donotfollow.com

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www.magiconline.com, www.projectshow.com, www.pooltradeshow.com



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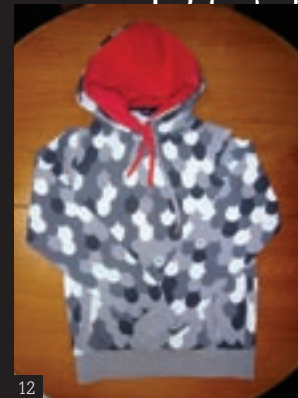
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1. Beautiful Decay magazine's t-shirt line
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www.copycollection.com
3. Triple 5 Soul
www.triple5soul.com
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5. Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction
www.artintheage.com
6. Imaginary Foundation
www.imaginaryfoundation.com
7. Upper Playground
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8. Loomstate
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9. King Stampede
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10. 10 Deep
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11. Mishka
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12. Gsus Sindustries
www.g-sus.com
13. Mighty Healthy
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14. Paul Frank
www.paulfrank.com
15. Puma
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16. PF Flyers
www.pfflyers.com
17. Pegleg NYC
www.peglegnyc.com
18. Triko
www.triko.com
19. Supra
www.suprafootwear.com
20. Converse
www.converse.com

Words Blair Carswell
Photo Nino

GUI BORATTO

A DETAIL-ORIENTED BRAZILIAN TECHNO PRODUCER DANCES ABOUT ARCHITECTURE.

You may be familiar with the saying (often attributed to Elvis Costello) “writing about music is like dancing about architecture”—the idea being that words aren’t able to capture the essence of music any better than moving around in a club captures the essence of a building. But dancing and architecture have more in common than one might think, especially when Brazilian techno producer Guilherme “Gui” Boratto is involved.

Boratto graduated from college with a degree in architecture and urban planning in the early ’90s. He had been a music fan for most of his life, reared on Black Sabbath, Kiss, Whitesnake, and Led Zeppelin as well as the canon of ’80s synth bands (Echo

& The Bunnymen, New Order, Depeche Mode).

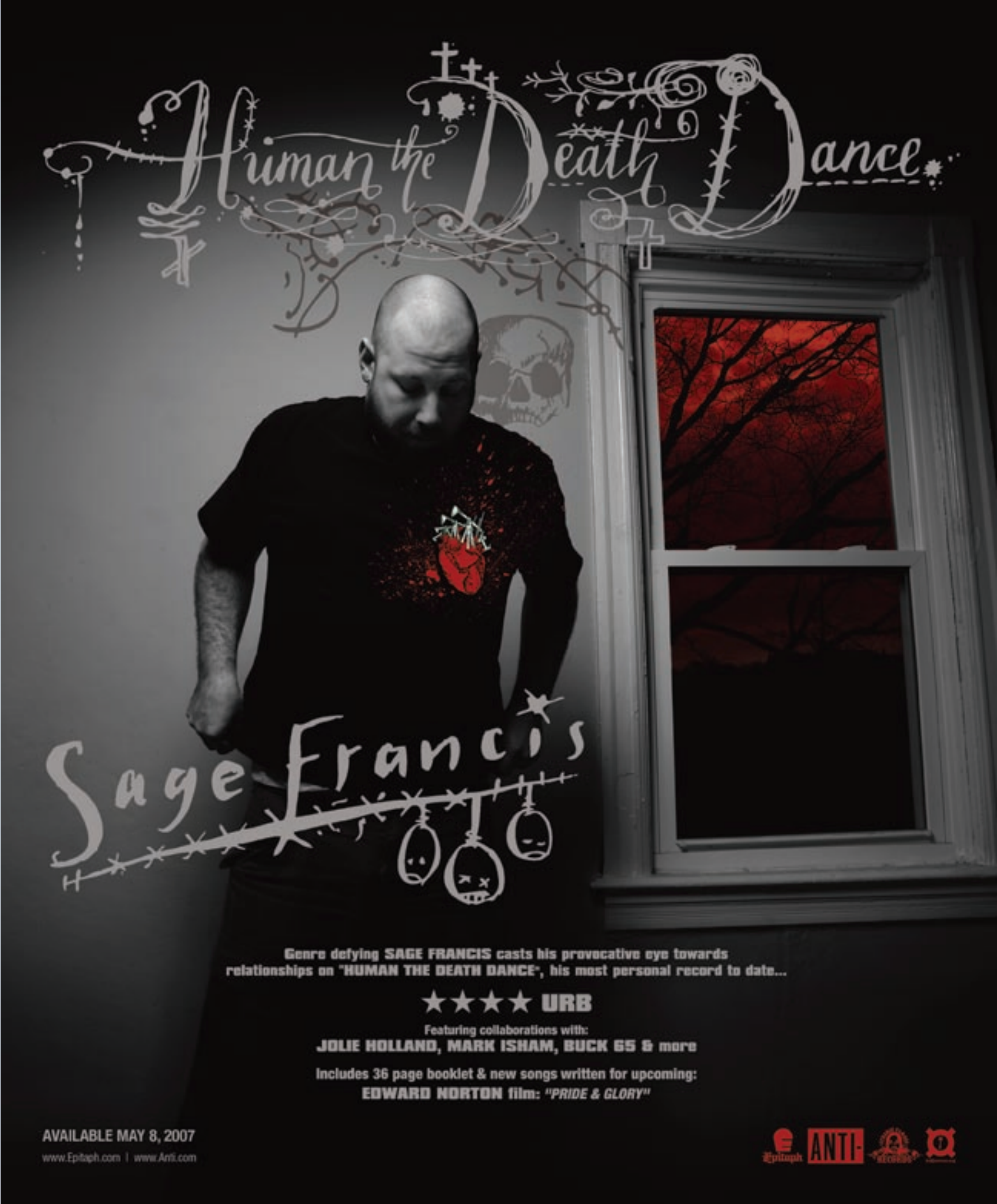
In 1993, Boratto ditched blueprints for his first love: making music. He didn’t unleash his techno straight away, embarking instead on a career writing commercial jingles and handling production and engineering duties for the like of Manu Chao, Gal Costa, Kaleidoscópio, Desiree, and Garth Brooks. Harsh deadlines kept him in check; up until relatively recently, he made techno “just for pleasure.” “Three or four years ago, I sent a CD to Kompakt, containing ‘Arquipélago’ and ‘Simetria,’” Boratto explains of his change of heart. “Michael [Mayer, Kompakt’s cofounder] just loved those songs.”

In late 2005, Kompakt’s sub-label K2 released “Arquipélago” to widespread critical acclaim and DJ praise. Suddenly, Boratto was a rising star, getting even more attention when that song, and his 2006 single “Like You,” were included on Kompakt’s annual compilation of their best releases, *Total 7*. The label asked for a full-length and got it; Boratto’s debut, *Chromophobia*, was released at the end of February. It’s an important milestone for Brazilian techno and is already vying for a spot in many Top 10 of 2007 lists.

Chromophobia boasts 13 tracks that range from delicate, almost-ambient techno to electro-pop to full-on hand-raisers, the one constant being subtlety. Boratto uses multiple time signatures in many songs, a tactic especially evident on “Terminal,” “Gate 7,” and the mind-warping “Mr. Decay,” where multiple drum patterns, synths, and sub-bass fight for your attention. Besides being fierce and rhythmic, *Chromophobia* is always melodic, which keeps the club bangers from being too harsh, and makes the gentle tracks even prettier. And with repeated listens—on headphones, the home stereo, and the club system—each song shows layer upon layer of detail and a precise construction that suggests Boratto is still putting his degree to good use.

“I think math is really present in both [music and architecture],” says Boratto. “The point of view of spaces, full and empty, is pretty much the same.” Hell, if you were to count and time some of these polyrhythms, you could probably calculate the volume of some dance club in downtown São Paulo. Then again, you could just dance.

Gui Boratto’s *Chromophobia* is out now on Kompakt.
www.guiboratto.com.br, www.kompakt-net.de



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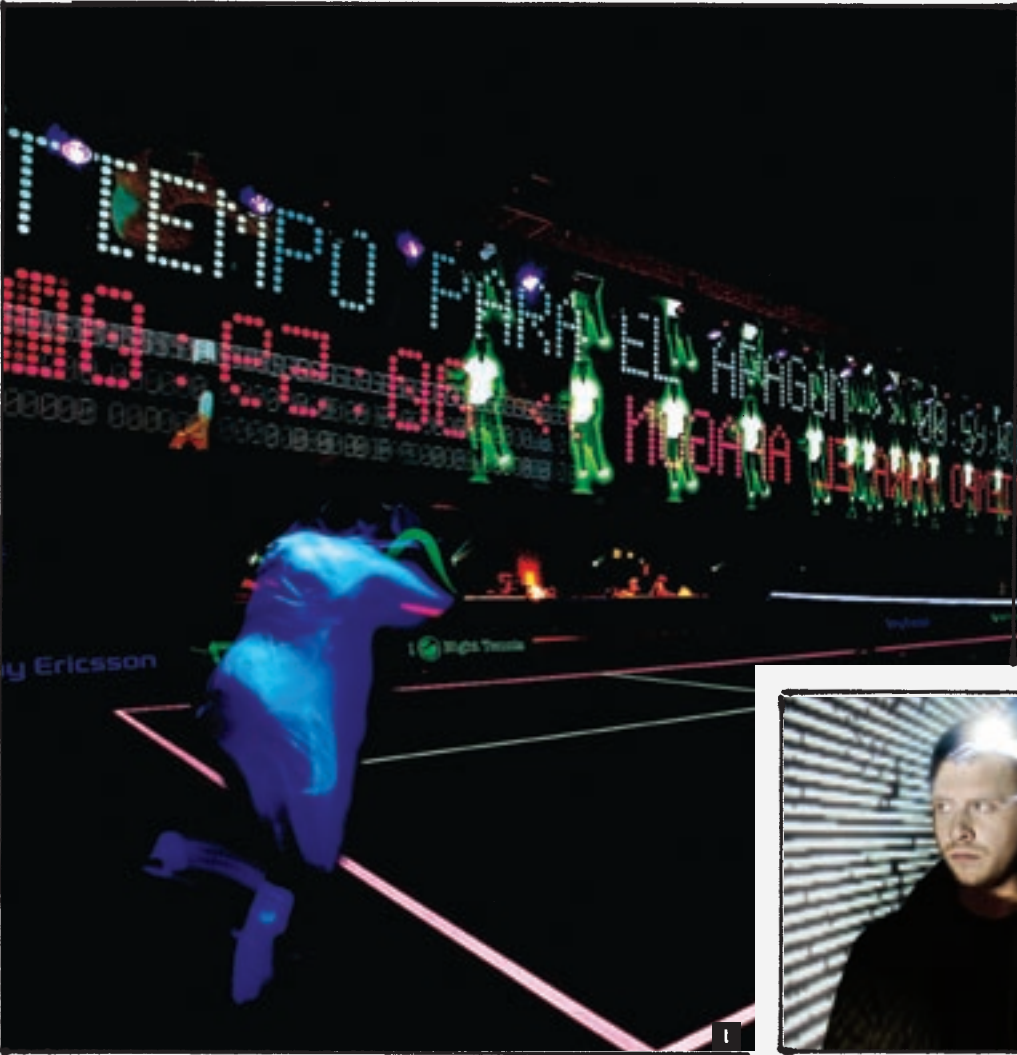
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SPIN CYCLE

News and gossip from the music world.

Posthumous Tupac and Biggie comps, move over. This month sees the release of **Elliott Smith's** *New Moon*, a double-disc of 24 songs the troubadour recorded between 1995 and '97, likely seconds from the *Either/Or* sessions. Still, Smith's seconds are like some crappy guy's premier cuts, right? • Expect *Volta*, Björk's long-awaited follow-up to *Medúlla*, this month. And expect some weirdness: guests include **Antony**, **Lightning Bolt's** **Brian Chippendale**, members of **Konono N°1**, an Icelandic 10-piece, an all-female brass section, and beat-maker **Timbaland**. • Detroit's electronic music festival (we think it's called **Movement** again, but it's changed nearly every year since its 2000 inception) is set for Memorial Day Weekend. Techno and house heads rejoice: The lineup includes **Abe Duque & Blake Baxter**, **Baby Ford & Zip**, **Damian Lazarus**, **Gui Boratto**, **Jeff Mills**, **Kate Simko**, **Luciano**, **Matthew Dear**, **Michael Mayer**, **Monolake**, **Moodymann**, **Pole**, **Rhythm & Sound**, **Richie Hawtin**, **Stacey Pullen**, and

Vladislav Delay. More at www.demf.com • After Jeff Mills' return to Detroit, check out his new clothing/art/music shop, **Gamma Player**, on West Division Street in Chicago. Visit www.gammaplayer.com. • At SXSW, clothing line **OBEY** released its fourth mixtape, with DJ **A-Trak** on the cuts, plus a t-shirt inspired by the mix (created by OBEY's **Shepard Fairey**). A-Trak just founded a new label with **Nick Catchdubs** called **Fool's Gold**, and is currently working on the new album by **Kid Sister**. • New labels abound. **Sub Pop** head **Jonathon Poneman's** **Hardly Art** imprint takes hold with its first signing, **Arthur & Yu**. And add another to the **Secretly Canadian/Jagjaguwar** family: **Dead Oceans** "will focus on bold and timeless recordings, not emphasizing a particular genre or scene, but instead fostering a diverse stable of sound-creators," sayeth its Bloomington, IN-based founders. Look for upcoming releases from **Iran**, **Bishop Allen**, **Evangelicals**, and **Dirty Projectors** at www.deadoceans.com. • Last October, students and community members from North Haven, ME performed a ballet/art/rock show inspired by **Deerhoof's** *Milk Man* album. Buy the 'Hoof-approved DVD at www.milkmanballet.com. • If you made it to Miami, hope you didn't miss the Sony Ericsson-hosted **Night Tennis**, played in total darkness save for some UV lights and glow-in-the-dark baselines. Other basslines were provided by **Masters and Work** and **Murk**. • Ah, Southern

California. If the promise of free food, tech-trance, and **God** gets your spirits up, check out Valencia's **First Techno Church of Worship** at www.jesusrave.com for one hell (oops!) of a sermon. • Venezuelan black metal bands just don't get enough attention from the toy community. But thanks to **Super Rad Toys** and **Frank Kozik**, **Sagoth** guitarist **Necromorth the Christraper** has been immortalized in vinyl. Want more? Check **Dalek's** take on the classic Japanese **Gosho**. Get 'em at www.3dretro.com and www.shoptradition.com, respectively. • In hip-hop news, all hell is breaking loose. Via his MySpace page, **El-P** lashed out at **Rawkus Records** after his ex-label posted a pic of him and **Diddy** together, insinuating that he had sold out. "You can keep that picture up there forever," the Def Jux founder wrote in his blog. "That one moment was more entertaining and fun and genuine than the entire sum of our business relationship." Find El-P's recent digi-single with **Trent Reznor**, "Flyology" b/w "EMG,"

at iTunes! • Mistah F.A.B. has been threatened with legal action from Columbia Pictures for his "Ghost Ride It" video, which features East Bay hip-hoppers ghost-riding a *Ghostbusters*-inspired hearse (and a song that samples the Ray Parker Jr.-recorded theme). Columbia is demanding that the video be pulled from all media outlets. • Oh, and **E-40** is not dead, despite what you might have read floating around the interweb. Long live 40-Watermelon!

1. Night Tennis
2. Elliott Smith
3. El-P
4. A-Trak
5. Dirty Projectors (Photo by Magha Gupta)
6. Evangelicals (Photo by Scott Mellgren)



1. LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY "Funky Joe" A rather rare record, and very disco. This is Mr. Perry's most demented recording!

2. SUNN O))) "Etna" The best metal ambient of today! I love the high-school feel of it!

3. JACQUES BRODIER "Extrait du Filtre de Réalité" This is a recording of a ghost speaking. Or maybe it is just Jacques' paranoid mind speaking.

4. HU VIBRATIONAL "Twins" This track shows that it is possible to make music with everything and anything. It moves me to the bones.

5. VICENTE FERNANDEZ "Las Llaves de Mi Alma" This song represents the ultimate glam for me. This guy has more style than Zeki Müren and that ain't easy!

6. BRUCE HAACK "Bored of Education" The full title of this record is *Dance to the Music: A Participation Album for All Children*. It certainly speaks to the child in me.

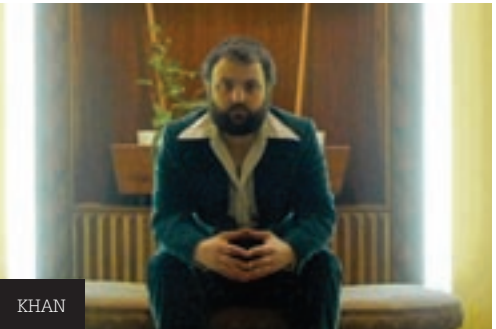
7. PETTER & THE PIX "As a Soul" A very cute, funky song on this brand new Gus Gus label, Pineapple. It really sounds like there is tropical fruit growing in Iceland.

8. ZEIGENBOCK KOPF "Sex With A Man" Kinda my all-time favorite band, and breakcore song. The title says it all!

9. CURRENT 93 "Idumaea (Baby Dee Version)" I met the band in Berlin and I have to say that it is a must-see show. Baby Dee is a truck-driving angel who bewitched me forever with her voice

10. WEIRD WAR "AK-47" Best terrorist disco track ever.

Khan's *Who Never Rests* (Tomlab) is out now. www.tomlab.de



CONFIDENCE MAN

LEAVING LUCK TO HEAVEN,
MATTHEW DEAR BECOMES
ONE OF THE NEW BREED OF
TECHNO SUPERSTARS.
WORDS PHILIP SHERBURNE
PHOTOS DOUG COOMBE

Much ink has been spilled over the way that hip-hop artists are increasingly becoming defined by their entourages. Less discussed is the fact that techno is going the same route. (For proof, reference any photograph of the DJ booth when Richie Hawtin is holding court.) The proliferation of discount airlines and the growing notion of a “clubbing season”—marked by the opening and closing parties of Ibiza’s biggest institutions—are turning DJ entourages stateless and nimble, as quick as a flash mob and as ubiquitous as a 4/4 kick.

Matthew Dear may seem an unlikely person to possess such a posse. Since his 12” debut in 1999, the quiet Ann Arbor, MI-based producer has been a staple of the Ghostly International label roster, his loopy, minimal tracks synonymous with underground—some might even say “indie”—techno. But the breakaway success of his 2003 single “Dog Days” and his increasingly on-the-mark productions and remixes as Audion—among whose many triumphs is the 2006 techno anthem “Mouth to Mouth”—have put him on a parallel trajectory with techno’s recent worldwide resurgence. Now he’s got four appearances in Ibiza this summer and a pending residency at one of L.A.’s biggest clubs. He’s touring the world nonstop, and wherever he touches down, a crowd of people does too.

Every time I’ve crossed Dear’s path in the last couple of years—Mexico City, Barcelona, Portland, San Francisco—he’s been surrounded by an impromptu assemblage of people who have arrived for the sole purpose of spinning in his

orbit. Over a recent weekend in San Francisco, a handful of old friends from L.A. have flown up on a moment’s notice just to have dinner and hit the club before flying home the next morning. At a recent gig in the Midwest, he used his Blackberry to coax two buddies into buying plane tickets, right there at the venue; they followed him to Miami for the following night’s party. A friend of mine from Mexico City tells me that a dozen people have contacted her for travel advice; they’re all coming down to celebrate Dear’s birthday at a villa in the countryside. All good DJs specialize in the art of moving butts; Dear specializes in moving them across multiple time zones.

SING YOUR LIFE

In close company, Dear doesn’t come off as a superstar, or even necessarily the center of attention, but there’s no doubt he is. And he stands to become even better known with the release of his ambitious new album, *Asa Breed*—the first recording under his birth name since 2004’s *Backstroke* EP. With its confessional lyrics,

warm timbres, and Eno-like overtones, Dear’s idiosyncratic take on electronic pop could easily cross him over to large-scale popularity among indie-rock crowds. This prospect looks even more likely given Dear’s live-performance aspirations: When *Asa Breed* goes on the road, Dear will take to the mic, ceding the rhythm section to John Gaviglio and Mark Maynard of the band Cannons.

Dear tried singing and playing live alongside a collaborator once before, for the *Backstroke* tour. “I was just having fun,” says Dear. “At that point in my life I just wanted to play shit and I wanted to try something new, so I didn’t think too much about it.” Reviews were mixed, and Dear acknowledges the criticism: “I’d say 50% of the shows were awesome, and 50% were people getting used to it.” This time out, Dear has already spent a week in New York rehearsing with his bandmates, and with much of the album’s material written to include more electric and acoustic instrumentation, he seems much more confident about assuming center stage.



“After ‘Mouth to Mouth,’ I could make acoustic folk ukulele music if I wanted to.”

MOUTHING OFF

The very model of tall, dark, and handsome, Dear is unfailingly polite, but he can seem distant, even standoffish, around those who don't know him. Among friends, his shyness melts away, and he's not afraid to goof on your outfit or your romantic misadventures, or even to mock-boast about his own success. "'Mouth to Mouth' secured my fuckin' fate, man," he says at a boisterous dinner one night. "After 'Mouth to Mouth,' I could make acoustic folk ukulele music if I wanted to, and if people said anything to me, I could just be like"—he adopts an ironically cocky expression—"Hey! 'Mouth to Mouth!'"

Like many introverts, Dear tries on extroversion—especially when the liquor flows freely—but he has the sense to back away when the bluffing misfires. Over sushi in San Francisco, a friend-of-a-friend sitting at the crowded table doesn't understand why Dear and I are hunched over my tape recorder. "I'm being interviewed," he shouts, grinning and spilling sake. "It's *my* interview! Shut the fuck up!" Soon after, the kid slinks off. Later, in the club, a girl approaches Dear to tell him that back at the sushi restaurant he'd hurt her boyfriend's feelings. In a flash, Dear is at the guy's side to apologize for the joke gone bad. A week later, recounting the episode, he still seems clearly pained.

Dear readily owns up to being shy, and there's a song called "Shy" on *Asa Breed*. It's ambiguous and, like most of the record, more than a little brooding: "*I've got some reasons to be kept inside/Don't go outside just to stay alive.*"

Whatever he's keeping inside, Dear has to go outside a lot these days. He has spoken openly about the way that partying becomes a crutch when you're moving from city to city, stranger to stranger. You get the sense that in drawing people around him, he's building a barrier against the fakeness and enforced loneliness of the star DJ's career.

That's not to say Dear's lifestyle has a monastic bent. On another recent swing through San Francisco, the after-show gathering at a friend's house lasted well into broad daylight; Dear woke up on a couch hours after his plane had left. No wonder that when I first heard *Asa Breed*'s "Give Me More," which includes the cryptic lyric "*I awake in the middle of days/After dreaming about plays/I'll never make in my life,*" I misheard the rhyme as "planes." He screws up his face when I tell him this.

"I'm not *that* literal," he says, a little huffily.

WELL BRED

When it comes to lyrics, Dear is actually the opposite of literal: he's vague, evasive, downright obfuscatory. "Let people Google it themselves," he says when I ask him where the title *Asa Breed* comes from. "That's what makes it fun. It's not smart. It's not hidden." (For the lazy, it's the name of a minor character in Kurt Vonnegut's sci-fi novel *Cat's Cradle*.)

If Dear's evasiveness is surprising, it's because *Asa Breed* sounds like the work of an artist putting himself on the line—baring his soul, even. A pop record, it's far more indebted to song structure than any of Dear's previous work: Where

Audion tracks routinely push the 10-minute mark, the average length of an *Asa Breed* cut is a radio-friendly three minutes. The 4/4 chug of house and techno is still the rhythmic foundation of his music, but synthesizers and drum machines make room for electric and acoustic guitars, high-necked basslines, and live drums and tambourines. On the surprise cut "Elementary Lover," labelmates Mobius Band contribute Afro-pop-inflected licks to an easy shuffle that recalls Tony Allen.

More than anything, though, it's Dear's voice that makes *Asa Breed* seem so personal. Every one of the album's 13 tracks features his multi-tracked vocals—baritone, alto, and falsetto fluttering in uneasy harmony. And the lyrics, more often than not, are dark, shifty, and plagued with doubt.

"There have been times when I slipped and fell," he sings on "Fleece on Brain," the album's uneasy opening cut. On the grinding but somehow sprightly "Don and Sherri," he intones, "*I've been sending you signals/But my signals have never been seen/I've been writing you letters/But those letters never leave me.*" "Pom Pom," which sounds like a bizarre fusion of Kompakt, Yaz, and The Beach Boys, might even be more telling: "*I've got to figure out love/It's such a tricky thing/Can include diamond rings.*" When I ask Dear, who is married, what his wife thinks of the lyric, he only laughs.

"You know what? She hasn't said anything. The good thing is that all my other songs are so abstract, I can just say that one is too."

"I channel people," he continues. "I channel characters. It might not be about me, but it's about an experience. It's almost like a story, but very abstract and open-ended." Sometimes the story itself hardly matters—the words and phrases, from their connotations to their purely phonetic properties, function like the loops in techno. On the ominous "Will Gravity Win Tonight?" confessional lead vocals are offset by tightly trimmed *oohs* and *ahs* that, on closer inspection, reveal themselves to be a sort of mantra: "More work to be done."

"That's the prime example of what I learned in techno and applied to organic music," says Dear. "I wanted to loop vocals and use them more like a rhythm. The voice doesn't have to mean anything. I want it to mean something different to everybody that hears it."

The album's emotional core, "Deserter" (also its first single), underscores the ambiguity at the heart of the record. Over a keening, electric-guitar-led melody, Dear conjures Ian Curtis and The Psychedelic Furs as he drones:

*What was that
You found deserted
Lost and alone
The world around you
Is gone perverted
Don't be afraid
This is what you've been
saving for
Everything that you've
done
Nothing seems to be what
it's worth*

On the page, the lyrics might not look like much—a little adolescent, a little clumsy—but rising up from the mix, they reach out and draw you in. And the chorus

**“The voice
doesn’t have to
mean anything.”**

might as well be a lifeline to doubters everywhere:

*I ain't really all that I been looking for
It really doesn't matter but I try to do more
Just keep on searching, don't be uncertain
Your life will only be just what you want it for*

The words jumped out at me as I took a sullen neighborhood walk, brooding over a depression that had plagued me for months. Turning self-doubt into a kind of security blanket, it gave me a peace I hadn't felt in weeks.

"I wrote that song three years ago," says Dear. "I wrote that song before I ever toured the world! It goes, 'Been around the world, seen my share...' I wrote 'Deserter' knowing what I *would* do."

No wonder it sounds so reassuring: It's like a message from the future, a consolation that everything really *is* going to be ok.

DEAR IN THE HEADLIGHTS

Matthew Dear resists putting too much stock in connecting his confessions—or perhaps, his characters' confessions—to himself. Just as he sings in three-part self-harmony and counts Audion, False, and Jabberjaw among his various aliases, there are many Matthew Dears. There's the Matthew Dear who mouths off to a stranger and apologizes later. There's the Matthew Dear who looks almost scarily confident behind the DJ mixer, the very picture of poise with a matte silver chain dangling from his neck.

There's the Matthew Dear who treats his father to a fly-fishing trip in the Gulf of Mexico. (Dear credits his father, a commercial fisherman and home-taping amateur musician, with instilling in him the knowledge that "you didn't have to have a label, you didn't have to make records—you could just record your own music and play it for yourself, and it didn't mean anything else; it wasn't about being a 'recording artist.'") And then there's the Matthew Dear who surrounds himself with cronies and cohorts and co-conspirators, staving off the loneliness of the road.

At a party at this year's Winter Music Conference, Dear played the main room; unfortunately, the venue was too big, the crowd too small, and all but a few head-

noddors migrated to the side room where Miss Kittin was playing. Dear soldiered on, playing a mind-bending set of minimal techno. I was standing at the bar, the music still playing, when I noticed someone next to me: it was Dear, on leave from deck duty. "Can you guys come up and hang out with me?" he asked, gesturing to the empty booth. "I'm bored."

Matthew Dear's *Asa Breed* is out now on Ghostly International.

www.matthewdear.com, www.ghostly.com



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AUD MAN OUT Matthew Dear's mind-meltingest dancefloor tracks

Audion "Mouth to Mouth"

Ghostly's sub-label Spectral's highest selling record to date, "Mouth to Mouth" began making the rounds shortly before last year's DEMF; when Richie Hawtin used it to close his festival set, it cemented its reputation as one of *the* tracks of 2006. "It's not a track, it's a moment," says Dear. "It's 12 minutes of bliss."

Audion "I Gave You Away"

Less dramatic than "Mouth to Mouth," this recent compilation cut might actually be the better track. The reverb on the drums feels simultaneously close and faraway, queasy synths chafe against strict time-keeping, and handclaps slam shut like rat traps—the whole thing's at once claustrophobic and horizon-wide.

Hot Chip "No Fit State (Audion Remix)"

Preserving nothing of the original but the dirge-like title phrase, this oily carousel of a remix is druggy, disorienting, and not a little frightening—and that's *before* the alien-death-ray organs come down like a bolt from the blue.

Black Strobe "I'm a Man (Audion's Donation Mix)"

The lyrics are part lounge singer, part rock 'n' roll, and while they might raise eyebrows the first time you hear them, they soon make themselves at home. This is one of Dear's sexiest tracks, and the churning, Carl Craig-styled synths in the background make for a delirious peak-time tease.

Rise Up, the long-awaited album from veteran underground emissaries Zeph and Azeem, offers thirteen tracks (and two interludes) worth of consciousness-lifting metaphors, party-rocking beats, and undiluted, 100% rebel music from one of hip-hop's most slept-on duos. In the tradition of classic pairings like Guru & Premier, the D.O.C. and Dr. Dre, Eric B. & Rakim (and, more recently, Aceyalone and RJD2), *Rise Up* matches one DJ/producer with one MC, with suitably stellar results.

"King cobra venom in the sed-i-ments of my saliva! Look, I'm staring back, it's more than a performance / I'm recording tracks but while I rap, I'm reading auras"



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SUNNYSIDE UP

ON THEIR NEW RECORD, BRIGHTON ROCKERS ELECTRELANE
TEMPER A MOODY PAST WITH A HOPEFUL PRESENT.
WORDS ROBBIE MACKEY PHOTOS DEBBIE BRAGG

It begins with a swell. Twinkling guitars and a hopeful organ progression meet Verity Susman's yearning, siren-like voice like two fleshy hands interlocking fingers. Almost immediately, "The Greater Times" announces the arrival of a brand new Electrelane, a pop band that's been hiding in the shadow of a largely austere back-catalog, filled with dark-hued albums helmed by tough-guy engineer Steve Albini. *No Shouts, No Calls*, the Brighton four-piece's latest Too Pure offering—and its first with husband-and-wife production team Bille Skibbe and Jessica Ruffins—wells with a sort of musical optimism only hinted at on 2004's *The Power Out*, whose highs were coated in such a gloomy veneer that they almost skulked past unnoticed. On *No Shouts, No Calls*, Susman and company finally let loose the triumphant, hooky pop songs they've kept so close to their vest over the past decade.

PARK LIFE

Electrelane drummer Emma Gaze seems embarrassed to admit it now. But not too long ago, she was convinced that her band was calling it a day—that their last crescendo had been committed to tape, and that some journalist's final misguided Stereolab comparison had made its way onto the pages of some glossy mag. You could hardly call the trial separation a tough decision either—each member gladly put Electrelane on the back burner (they never *actually* broke up), pursuing interests of their own in every corner of the globe.

"We'd just all had enough. We had quite a few months off where none of us saw one another," Gaze chuckles nervously, recounting

a time when no two band members called the same time zone home. Bassist Ros Murray was in Madrid. Verity was in Berlin. Emma was in L.A., and guitarist Mia Clarke was in Chicago. "But then when we all started thinking about it," Gaze continues, "the reality was that we each really wanted to work it out."

A change of scenery and attending a few football matches together was all it took to patch things up. And though each previous Electrelane record had been created in Brighton, the band was itching to get out of town to write new material. They packed up and headed to Germany, working out new songs in an old recording studio that Verity had stumbled across during her time in East Berlin.





MIA



ROS



VERITY



EMMA

“I don’t think you could get much more different

than us and Sleater-Kinney.”

“Being in Berlin was just so exciting,” says Gaze. “It’s such an amazing city. It was summer. There was the World Cup. Everyone was crazy. You could feel the history. We were in a bubble. We’d get on the tram every day [and] go and spend time at some weird place by the river. Maybe selfishly, we weren’t affected by anything else. We just had lots of nice picnics in the park.”

SHOUT OUTS

You can almost hear those picnics, that tangible excitement, on *No Shouts*, a record that is perennially at ease, even during the pummeling guitar zig-zag of “Between the Wolf and the Dog” or the raucous, droning squall of “Five.” And Berlin’s

stamp is all over the album. “Tram 21” is a garage-inspired rocker whose train-like buzz chugs to a crescendo of staccato organ notes and a chorus of “la-la” backup vocals courtesy of Roz and Emma. “In Berlin,” perhaps the record’s most serene and beautiful track, soars on the back of a flowering string arrangement that quietly evokes the gravity of the band’s German holiday.

But the cheer isn’t a startling departure, perhaps because Electrelane still uses the same tools. Tracks like “After the Call,” whose slow, stately guitars suddenly burst into a ragged and propulsive fury, is full of Electrelane’s trademark moodiness, albeit tempered by an overarching sense of hope. However fresh and different *No Shouts* may sound,

Gaze dreads the knee-jerk comparisons the record will undoubtedly receive. Throughout their career, Electrelane has carried the torch for women in indie rock—their ability to straight-up shred speaking louder than words—yet they’re still saddled with unfounded comparisons to Sleater-Kinney or the recently disbanded Organ.

“Although we might like those bands, they’re not making anything like the music we are,” says Gaze. “We might agree with them on many levels, and we might want to play to the same kind of audiences, but musically I don’t think you could get much more different than us and Sleater-Kinney.”

Only the laziest critic would find S-K in the

freewheeling ukulele of “Cut and Run,” which sounds more akin to Beirut’s Balkan pop. And the subdued organ and persistent drumming of “To the East” get by on more of a lo-fi Arcade Fire charm than any sort of motorik Stereolab groove.

“Obviously it’s frustrating to get put in the box of ‘women musicians,’ Gaze states. “It’s just always been like that. I don’t know what it’d be like for it to be any way else.”

POP GOES

It’s interesting that Electrelane’s most positive record would be unveiled now, in an age of suffocating strife.



However inadvertent and organic the progression to *No Shouts* may have been, it's impossible not to feel as though the record exists as an answer to the prevailing gloom and doom. Gaze isn't so sure.

"We recorded the album when Palestine and Israel were fighting," she explains. "On German news there was all this war and bombings, and all the news programs were really intense. That personally affected us," she says, "but I don't think it affected us musically."

While *No Shouts* doesn't carry the extra weight of a political conscience, it does bear the hopeful strains of triumph over adversity, and Gaze is proud of the glow.

"What it took to get that record made," she muses, "It was a feat for everybody in the band. On many levels, it was quite an arduous journey, and I'm really proud of the outcome."

TOUGH GIRLS

The album completed, Emma Gaze doesn't have time for nerves. The band is too busy rehearsing for the most important tour of their 10-year career.

But when I ask her if she's even a little bit scared about hitting the road with The Arcade Fire (easily the most popular indie band in the world right now), she shrugs the question off with a steely confidence.

"I haven't really thought about it," says Gaze, taking a break from a five-hour marathon practice in Brighton. "I guess I'm not really scared."

Then again, why should she be? The tough part is already behind her.

Electrelane's *No Shouts, No Calls* is out May 5 on Too Pure.

www.electrelane.com, www.toopure.com



PURE POWER

A primer on
Electrelane's first
three records.

Words Trinity Toft

Rock It to the Moon (Let's Rock, 2001)

Electrelane started Let's Rock Records in 2001, releasing their debut album, *Rock It to the Moon*, and the *I Want to Be the President* EP. *RITTM* is moody and mostly instrumental—save a few haunting choruses, snippets of children's voices, and barking dogs (provided by drummer Emma's pups Yan and Igmar).

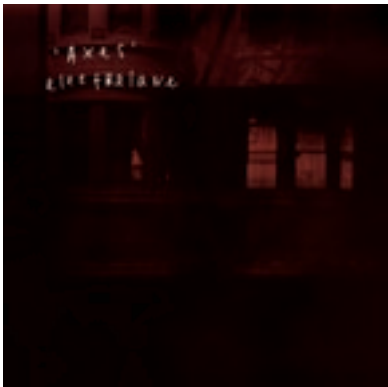
Best tracks: "Blue Straggler," "Gabriel"



The Power Out (Too Pure, 2004)

Lyrics and vocals proved very important on *The Power Out*, as the band pulled poetry from Catalan writer Juan Boscán Almogáver, quoted Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*, and sang in German, French, and English. While recording in Chicago with super-producer Steve Albini, the ladies hired a Chicago-based choir to help translate Siegfried Sassoon's poem "The Valleys" into song. Fun fact: "On Parade" was featured on an episode of *The OC*, when the Cohen men go to Vegas!

Best tracks: The whole album rules!



Axes (Too Pure, 2005)

Axes, the band's second album with Albini, is melancholy but strangely exuberant in parts. Electrelane touches on politics ("Those Pockets are People") and the once-again sparse lyrics are reminiscent of nursery rhymes, specifically Grimm's fairy tales ("Careful where you swing that axe/It might come back and hit you in the/Yes/No/Yes/No/No!/Yes/Yes/Oh!") go the lyrics to "I Keep Losing Heart"). An epic record.

Best tracks: "Eight Steps," "I Keep Losing Heart"



ALTERNATE, NIGRA

IT TOOK INVENTING
A FAKE PERSON
TO MAKE OREGON
HIP-HOP ACT
LIFESAVAS
GET REAL.
WORDS MAX HERMAN
PHOTOS AMANDA LOPEZ



LIFESAVAS (FROM LEFT): JUMBO THE GARBAGEMAN, VURSATYL, REV. SHINES

For hip-hop trio Lifesavas, the fine line between fact and fiction has temporarily become blurred. With their new album, this Portland, OR-based crew—consisting of Jumbo the Garbage Man, Vursatyl, and Rev. Shines—tossed out the old blueprint and created a cinematic concept effort as intricate as Prince Paul’s *A Prince Among Thieves*, with a narrator, segued scenes, and a fictionalized backstory.

When they talk about *Gutterfly: The Original Soundtrack*, MC/producer Jumbo and MC Vursatyl tell stories outlandish enough to be urban legends. When Jumbo recalls recording the album at their rundown garage studio, The Promiseland, he speaks of baseheads wandering around the premises and neighbors posting angry letters on the door telling them to keep the noise down. But, like the controversial blaxploitation flicks of the early-to-mid-’70s that inspired *Gutterfly*, this album delights in goofy exaggeration.

“Being able to hide behind characters really freed us up,”
-Vursatyl

FINDING FELDMAN

As the original story goes, *Gutterfly* was the creation of one Baraka Feldman—a Brooklyn-born writer/activist who moved to Portland in 1989 and eventually befriended the Lifesavas. After being diagnosed with terminal cancer, Feldman chose to pass along the incomplete screenplay for *Gutterfly* to the group. But, as Jumbo readily admits, Feldman never really existed, except in the group’s imagination.

“I really wanted to expose to people how multifaceted me and Vurs was,” Jumbo says, explaining why they made Feldman up. He says the group had a greater goal than deceit—they wanted to create a persona that had a mutual respect for hip-hop music and blaxploitation cinema. “It was similar to how Charlie Ahern [made] *Wild Style*,” says Jumbo. “Like, ‘How can I attach to this movement?’”

Jumbo explains that the Feldman character provided a bird’s-eye view of the story arc. “It’s like, ‘Maybe I can do it through this guy’s lens and actually take a look at myself and help people see me taking a look at myself.’ The only way to do that is to give [Feldman] a real scenario—like, ‘This is where he’s from, this is what he does, this is how he sees things,’ and then just leave it.”

WHAT BOX?

Feeling boxed-in following the release of their 2003 debut, *Spirit in Stone*, Lifesavas wanted to redefine themselves. This might seem odd,

considering critics and fans largely embraced *Spirit in Stone*, an expansive album that saw Lifesavas dip into everything from Peter Tosh-inspired riddims (“Fever”) to hardcore hip-hop activism (“Resist”). Still, the desire to completely flip the script on their second full-length remained.

“Underground hip-hop groups have a [stigma] that everything has to be this real positive, overly conscious type of vibe, so being able to hide behind characters really freed us up,” Vursatyl says of *Gutterfly*.

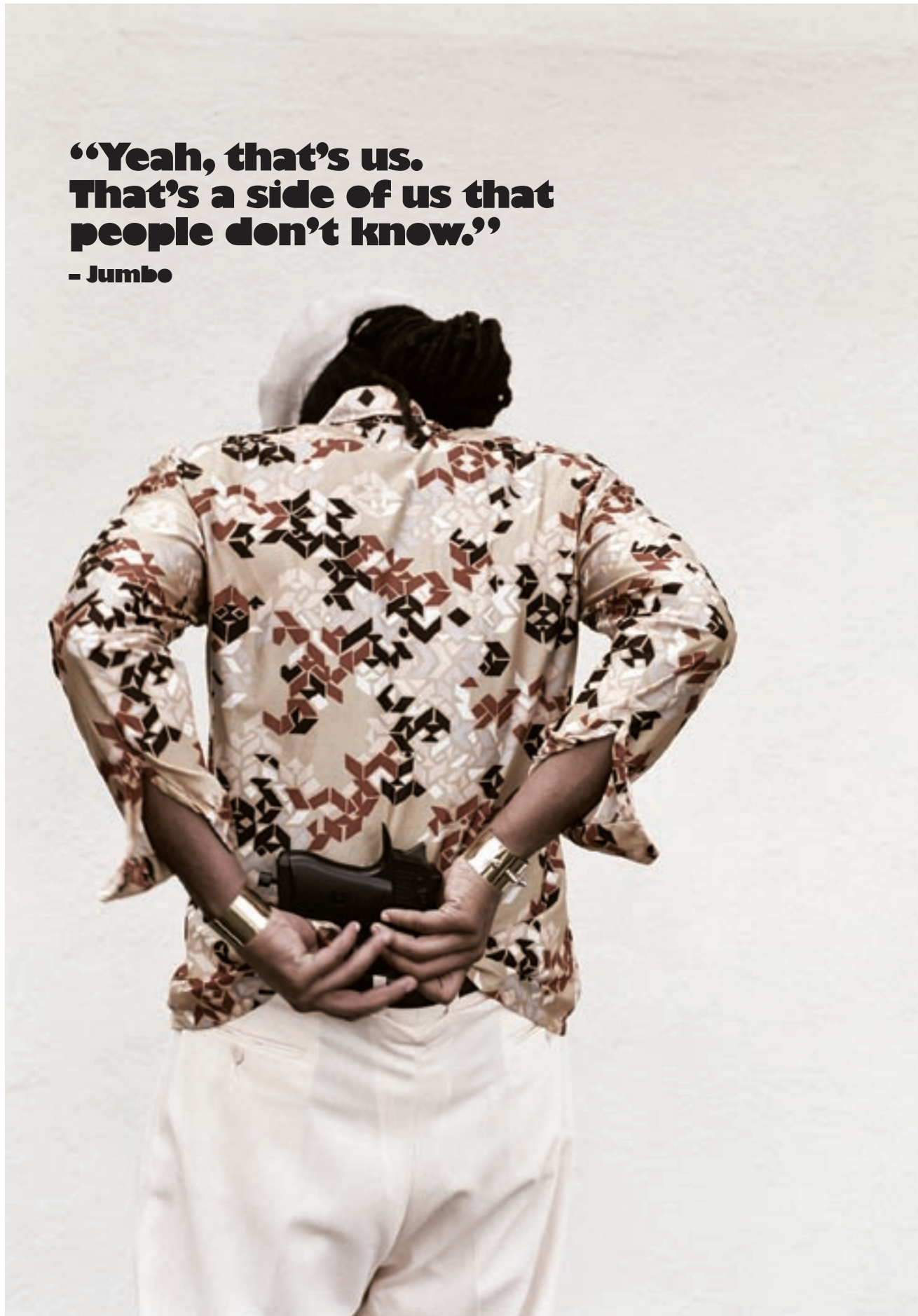
CASTING CALL

Of the many blaxploitation movies the Lifesavas drew inspiration from, the crew especially took note of Ralph Bakshi’s notorious film *Coonskin*. All along, it was the group’s goal to do something along the lines of this animation-meets-live-action flick about three prostitute-seeking cartoon criminals who cause havoc on the streets of Harlem. “The animation in that movie [featured] such grotesque stereotypes that it made sense,” explains Jumbo. “It challenged you, like, ‘Yeah, it’s animation sometimes, but it’s not light.’ It still has this adult tone to it.”

The characters in *Gutterfly* aren’t nearly as objectionable as those in *Coonskin*. The slick playboy Sleepy Floyd (Jumbo), the ruff-em-up enforcer Bumpy Johnson (Vurs), and the loud-mouthed white dude Jimmy Slimwater (Shines) sound like some of the most likeable

**“Yeah, that’s us.
That’s a side of us that
people don’t know.”**

- Jumbo



criminals ever imagined. The protagonists of the original blaxploitation flicks were meant to be heroes of the ‘hood, mired in the contradictory racial politics and realities of the 1970s. On *Gutterfly*, Lifesavas update funk sounds while showing that the triumphs and trials of ghetto life haven’t become less relevant over the last 30 years.

In the setting of Razorblade City, Sleepy, Bumpy, and Jimmy make an actual habit of uplifting their brethren. On the haunting, George Clinton-assisted “Night Out,” for example, Bumpy the burglar screams ‘foul’ when he’s pulled over and harassed by a racist cop on the prowl while his daughter cries from the backseat. On “Shine Language,” the characters encourage the disenfranchised citizens of Razorblade City to hustle any way they can to get ahead atop an epic string loop.

“We get off into different things [that] we’re dealing with in America and across the world, in terms of that power struggle,” Vurs explains of the album’s universal feel. “It was important to try to paint it so that people could relate to it in their personal situations today.”

GUN TALK

But a blaxploitation flick wouldn’t be complete without a little flossing and inflated thug talk, which the Lifesavas capture on the funky title track with Camp Lo and the rugged number “The Squeeze,” featuring Smif N Wessun. These aren’t the collaborations you may have expected but, as Jumbo explains, that’s the point.

“You’re like, ‘Y’all did a song with Smif N Wessun? Those are the gun clappers! Y’all did a song with Camp Lo? Those are the fashion, pimp slang-talking-type cats.’ And we’re like, ‘Yeah, that’s us. That’s a side of us that people don’t know.’”

Gutterfly: The Original Soundtrack is out now on Quannum Projects.
www.lifesavas.com, www.quannum.com



MACK MOVIES

Lifesavas pick
their favorite
blaxploitation
films.

Ralph Bakshi’s *Coonskin* wasn’t the only blaxploitation flick to inspire Lifesavas. Sure, they’ve seen their share of garbage from this era of cinema, but Vursatyl and Jumbo are proud to share the films they feel changed the ‘hood for good.

The Mack (1973)
Vurs: “It was definitely a major motion picture but it was still kind of like a documentary, if you go deep into it. They were using actual pimps and actual macks and all of that. They were really catching the essence of the culture.”

Superfly (1972)
Vurs: “It defined an era and it left so many people trying to live that dream to really become Superfly. There’s even cats today in the ‘hood—older dudes who are still pushing those Caddies and El Dorados. It became the symbol for what a mack or a player was.”

Dolemite (1975)
Jumbo: “Since he screamed out *The Mack* and *Superfly*, I got to scream out *Dolemite!*”

Cleopatra Jones (1973)
Jumbo: “To see a black super-heroine, and she’s fine? That gave me hope [laughs]. Like, Wonder Woman is cool, but Cleopatra got an afro and she’s strong and she knows kung-fu? Oh yeah, I love her.”

JUST DO IT

WANT TO GET HIGH-PROFILE RAPPERS TO SPIT ON YOUR BEATS? NEED TO MAKE AN INDIE ROCK TRACK INTO AN ELECTRO-HOUSE ANTHEM? PRODUCERS K-SALAAM, A TOUCH OF CLASS, DJ DAY, AND PILOOSKI WITH TIPS ON REMIXING, RE-EDITING, AND RETHINKING YOUR RECORDS.

ILLUSTRATIONS UPSO

DJ DAY

A TRUE-SCHOOL REVISIONIST MAKES SAMPLE-BASED HIP-HOP SOUND NEW AGAIN.

"DJing and production go hand-in-hand; each one is an extension of the other, to some degree," says DJ Day, who started scratching in 1989 and dove into beat-making a few years later. In 2004, he released his first 12", "What Planet What Station," a horn- and organ-driven remix of the Jungle Brothers' "Beyond This World" filled with party rocking vocal snippets. "The remixes were more of a way to get my foot in the door," he explains. "I didn't want to be labeled as 'the remix guy,' so I kind of steered away from repeating it."

Day's sound is constantly evolving, but certain elements—soulful loops, intricate percussion, and vocal samples—are almost always present. His main tool is the MPC2000XL, but he also employs a Fender Rhodes Mark II, ARP Odyssey, Solina String Ensemble, Moog Prodigy, MicroKorg, clavinet and assorted percussion instruments. Having run up against the limitations of making music that is, by his own estimate, 75% sample-based, he's had to find creative workarounds. "I try to take as little as possible, but sampling a key change from the same song can make a big difference. I usually do this with basslines that I filter." As for crafting the all-important backbeat, he explains, "Normally, I start with the drums and really

take time to dial them in. I generally will chop up drums and use the same set, then I'll layer one of the kicks pitched down by 50% and filtered, or an 808 to add bottom."

He's also reaped huge rewards from his own live instrumentation. "Something as simple as live percussion, like a shaker or a tambourine, can really add another element to a beat," he states.

His advice for those who may be afraid of bona fide jamming? "This will probably piss off some musicians, but I don't believe you have to be trained or very competent to play instruments. As long as you can get your idea or feeling across, sometimes that's enough. I'd pick up a tuba and play it if I had one." No tuba yet, but he does have a wooden flute he bought for a dollar at the zoo, as well as a thing called a Xaphoon, which is like a pocket saxophone. "I don't know how to play it all," he says, laughing. "Right now it sounds more like an animal dying, but I'll figure it out." *Ross Hogg*

DJ Day's *The Day Before (The Backcatalogue)* is out now on Melting Pot Music.

www.myspace.com/djday

A TOUCH OF CLASS

TWO SWISS IMPORTS SERVE UP TIPS FOR YOUR NEXT DANCE-ROCK REMIX.

Oliver Stumm and Domie Clausen will be the first to tell you that remixing pop and rock songs is a craft unto itself, and requires a lot more thought than major-label execs put in.

“We always wonder why certain record companies want a dance remix of, say, a ballad,” says Stumm, emailing on behalf of himself and his partner, more popularly known as production/remix duo A Touch of Class. “If you want a dance song, it’s easier to make a dance song than to remix a ballad.” And how about the ugly trend of remixing rock and soul classics? “We’re not going to paint over Picasso!” says ATOC, who have put their spin on tracks from Le Tigre, Scissor Sisters, and Services, among others. “There has to be a (non-monetary) reason to give birth to a remix.”

The twosome has pretty firm guidelines before they go in with their Pro Tools Ginsu—those rules start with having a good original recording to work with. Case in point: “Listen Up” from indie darlings The Gossip.

“Everything you get from [The Gossip] is incredible: vocals, guitars, bass, drums!,” they exclaim. “We wanted to keep the remix as close as possible to the original since it’s so good, just make it a bit more dancey. So we added a few things in the rhythm section and

built our synths around the original bassline. We also tried to create a b-part for the chorus to make it stand out more. We used the classic PCM 70 Lexicon reverb to give it an ’80s kind of a sound.”

The duo can’t stress enough the importance of paying attention to vocals. “They will tell you what to do,” says Stumm. “Also put in the de-esser, [a plug-in that cools down ‘s’ sounds], so you don’t destroy your ears... and create a chord progression that works for the vocals.”

After building instruments around the chord progression, incorporating non-musical noises and FX, and arranging, re-arranging, and re-re-arranging the edit, the most important element is to “delete the stuff that doesn’t really help the song, even if you worked on that part for 16 hours!” says ATOC.

“It’s a psychological thing,” the duo reminds, so take a break before you put the finishing touches on your remix. “Sleep for a while or listen to completely different music,” they advise. *Ken Taylor*
A Touch of Class Still Sucks!, a collection of ATOC’s remixes and productions, is out now on A Touch of Class. www.atouchofclassusa.com



PILOOSKI

A PARISIAN WHIZ ON THE BASICS OF MAKING DEVASTATING EDITS.

Cédric Marszewski, 34, revives ghosts. Not because he lives next to the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris—though that’s cool—but because he has a talent for finding forgotten ’80s b-sides, downtrodden prog rock jams, and ’60s soul gems and breathing new life into them. He records them into the computer, scissors them to pieces, then sutures their parts back together into hypnotic, reverb-heavy space jams perfect for drinking mushroom tea at 10 a.m.

Pilooski, a longtime hip-hop DJ, began doing edits first out of necessity, pasting longer intros onto ’60s and ’70s soul and rock tracks to make them easier to mix. Eventually, he started adding backbeats, effects, and original melodies and hooked up with two other Parisians to form the D-I-R-T-Y Soundsystem. Via their Dark & Lovely edits label, he’s reworked the raw moodiness of Krautrock band Amon Düül’s “Kismet” and the bittersweet go-go dance beats of Franki Valli and the Four Seasons’ “Beggin’,” to name a few.

“I’ve got to love the track first,” says Pilooski of his process. “Then I start chopping up the parts and I add a beat, maybe, and effects. Then I’ll use synthesizers, sometimes replaying the basslines or adding noises. I put all my tracks through effects pedals and this old ’80s mixer to get a dirty sound. By using pedals instead [of software effects] I’m sure I’m going to get some hiss—the computer is too clean for me at the moment.”

Pilooski says his edits take anywhere from two hours to three days, depending on the complexity and recording quality of the original track. “The Can edit [of ‘Mothersky’] was the longest. The original was 15 minutes long and it was such a mess to get the track in loads of pieces. When you start taking parts out, it changes the structure. When you go to reconstruct the track, you have to make it logical, like it was in the first place. A good edit is when you don’t feel there’s something missing.”

Though software can now quantize even the most wayward drumming, Pilooski deliberately chooses to keep some edits loose and shambolic. “It doesn’t really bother me when it’s not [perfectly] on the 4/4,” he muses. “I used to love RZA production for the Wu-Tang Clan because it wasn’t always perfectly on tempo; same thing with some of the Mobb Deep and Madlib stuff.”

Pilooski prefers to save the strict grids for his techno productions, dirty beats in the vein of French contemporaries Mr. Oizo and Sebastian. And just because he likes his edits kind of psychedelic-sounding, that doesn’t mean you have to. “There’s no rules, as long as it sounds good,” he enthuses. “Just try it!”

A D-I-R-T-Y compilation of weird disco and ’80s music, with an edit 12” from Pilooski and Joakim, is out soon on Tigersushi. A compilation of all the D-I-R-T-Y edits will be out on their eponymous label this summer. www.d-i-r-t-y.com, www.myspace.com/pilooski



K-SALAAM

A HIP-HOP BEATMAKER LANDS BIG NAME VOCALISTS THE FIRST TIME OUT.

When K-Salaam left Minnesota for New York City in spring 2005, he had some well-received DJ mixtapes to his name but little in the way of production credits or industry connections. Within a year, he and partner Nick “Beatnick” Phillips had completed *The World Is Ours*, an ambitious debut LP with guest vocalists including Saigon, Dead Prez, Mos Def, Sizzla, Capleton, Talib Kweli, Luciano, Busy Signal, and Papoose. None of the aforementioned artists had heard of K-Salaam before he personally handed them beats for the project, which the Canadian-born Iranian-American describes as a message to “all people who have had their land stolen from them, from New Orleans to Palestine.”

“My mentality was ‘This has to happen,’” says K-Salaam, who secured investors him-

self (though distributed by Koch, the album was originally released on his own Shining Star Music) and funded trips to Jamaica on the mere promise of gaining an audience with the likes of Capleton. “If you don’t have money, you have to give them other reasons to do it. I’d find a way to get numbers for people like Capleton, and they saw there was a whole message and movement behind this. I played them the music face to face and, after that, it was a done deal.”

He got dancehall kingpin Sizzla involved by walking up to the artist’s compound in August Town, Kingston, and handing beats to some locals. “Someone suggested that if I just went there, people might be like, ‘Damn, this kid’s got balls’ and introduce me, so I did that,” he says. “The next thing I knew,

I got a call saying ‘Sizzla loves the tracks, he wants to meet you.’”

What does he suggest to would-be producers trying to secure the right artists to complement their vision? “Number one, you gotta have something special, and be someone people want to meet,” the 27-year-old says. “If you’re a producer or DJ, you gotta have the goods. Finally, you gotta make it happen. Don’t expect it to be easy—it’s gonna be very hard. Trying to do something big as a new artist is a big step, so you gotta be on top of your game.”

K-Salaam’s *The World Is Ours* will be re-released as a CD/DVD on VP Records this summer. www.k-salaam.com, www.vprecords.com



THE WARRIORS

ONCE PARTNERS, NOW RIVALS, MAVADO AND AIDONIA ARE DANCEHALL'S MOST VOLATILE YOUNG LYRICISTS.

WORDS JESSE SERVER
PHOTOS MARTEI KORLEY

“I’m not going to lose mi life over music. Mi nuh want it.”

– Aiden Atona

Seated on a stage at Brooklyn’s BAM Rose Cinemas, Aiden Atona looks visibly uncomfortable. A cap pulled low over his eyes, the deejay is staring at the floor—hardly a pose befitting an emerging superstar whose songs ooze charisma and jovial panache.

At the moment, however, Aiden is facing what you might call “the music.” Along with the four-piece Ward 21 crew and fellow deejay Mr. Peppa, the 24-year-old from Kingston’s Red Hills Road is participating in a post-screening discussion of *Dancehall Draft Picks*, an MTV-style, behind-the-scenes documentary look at the latest wave of dancehall deejays (including himself, Ward 21, Peppa, Alozade, Busy Signal, Hollow Point, Mavado, and Tony Matterhorn). Almost instantly, the roundtable becomes a debate between some audience members and the artists regarding the recent glut of violent gunman tunes in dancehall, and the role artists play in depicting Jamaican life for the rest of the world.

Cornered in the theater’s lobby after the panel discussion, Aiden—suddenly expressive after remaining mum through much of the debate—explains the deejays’ predicament.

“You sing girl song, you sing culture song, you sing gun song, you sing different song [but] di selector pick di gun song,” the 24-year-old says, incredulous. “What yuh gwaan do? Yuh gwaan voice two more dem gun songs!”

The subject is a sore one in and around the dancehall of late, as the genre’s key artists attempt to diffuse the tension created late last year when nearly every dancehall star that matters was embroiled in a high-profile clash with a peer (or three or four). When a near-riot spurred by internal tensions among Bounty Killer’s crew, The Alliance, broke out at Kingston’s Arizon Inn club in December, the situation appeared not only out of control but headed for a tragedy of Biggie-and-2PAC-like proportions.

“It definitely can reach a level... Trust, mi nuh like the vibes going on in di dancehall, and I say so,” says Aiden, whose beef with former partner-in-crime Mavado erupted when the two found themselves on opposite ends of the war between Bounty Killer and former protégé Vybz Kartel. It was that tension that led to the Arizon Inn melee, which was set off by the two artists’

entourages after Vybz Kartel appeared on stage with Aiden. (Vybz and Aiden were officially booted from The Alliance shortly thereafter.) “We lose Mr. Wacky [a.k.a. Jamaican dancehall choreographer Bogle] just recently, and that hurt dancehall a lot,” Aiden says, talking around his pending feuds with Bounty and Mavado with an air of diplomacy. “Losing an artist would shut down dancehall. I’m not going to lose mi life over music. Mi nuh want it.”

GANGSTER FOR LIFE

Without a doubt, Mavado (a.k.a. 26-year-old David Brooks) is the most intriguing and unique reggae artist to emerge in recent memory.

Dancehall tends to be regimented to a fault, with artists recording songs that generally fall into one of three categories: gun tunes, girl tunes, and culture tunes. These lyrical boxes are rarely broken, the formulas rarely crossbred. But with his weighty, sing-song-y timbre and his ethereal and thoughtful but uncompromisingly gangsta lyrics, Mavado appears uniquely able to transcend reggae’s self-imposed barriers. Creating what will perhaps be a new template for

“When mi look out to the whole world, crime gwaan everywhere. Not because mi sing about it.”

— Mavado

the music’s future, his place in dancehall today evokes the way Biggie and 2PAC revolutionized rap with deeper-than-deep meditations that made the dark underbelly of society seem like the most beautiful thing in the world. “Gangster for Life,” Mavado’s signature catchphrase (and the title of his upcoming debut album for VP Records), seems to resonate with the young shottas in Kingston and Brooklyn the way “Thug Life” spoke to corners worldwide in 1995.

“Mi come out and say ‘Gangster for Life,’ ‘Real McKoy,’ ‘Weh Dem a Do,’ all dem real talk and gangster tings people nuh talk about,” says Mavado in a phone interview. “Dem nuh talk about the real part. When mi see reality, mi sing about the real part.”

Getting a hold of Mavado is no easy feat. After a convoluted phone number trail leads from Queens to Mavado’s Kingston garrison, Cassava Piece, his manager Julian Jones-Griffiths finally corrals him for an interview as he prepares for a night of laying down vocals at the studio of production team Daseca. “He rides a bike, so he can only answer the phone when he stops—and when he stops, anything can happen,” Jones-Griffiths claims.

Of course, if you wanted to find Mavado, Daseca Studio would be a good start. While young dancehall vocalists usually find themselves in a mentor/apprentice relationship with established producers, Daseca and Mavado emerged together in 2004 when the four-man production unit issued Anger Management, a riddim that would spawn Mavado’s breakthrough hit, “Real McKoy.” As their respective stocks have risen, the producers and the artist have remained atypically loyal to one another, scoring nearly all of their hits, from the Busy Signal collaboration “Badman Place” to the recent “Dying” (a haunting track inspired by Mavado’s father’s recent murder), in tandem.

“Before mi know Daseca, nobody know Mavado and nobody know Daseca deh same way,” Mavado explains. “Dem teach me certain things that complete me, certain keys and notes. Before, mi love to sing but mi no really know the fuller side. Me and Daseca have unity—it’s sort of a family.”

With Mavado’s biggest hit sans Daseca, “Weh Dem a Do” (on Delly Ranx’s Red Bull & Guinness riddim), still penetrating the American airwaves, the artist is gearing up for the release of *Gangster for Life*, due out in July on VP Records. While that means more eyes will be on him than ever, he remains committed to his portrayal of the darker side of life.

“Mi haffa sing to di vibes of what happen right now,” he says. “When mi look out to the whole world, crime gwaan everywhere. Not because mi sing about it. It already happen long before mi born, long before you weh born.”

REAL AND PROPER WAY

Like Mavado, Aidonia is forging his own path as a deejay. While his playful flow clearly takes a page from his mentor, Vybz Kartel, Aidonia is even more heavily influenced by hip-hop. (He lived with his father in Brooklyn and the Bronx for several years after being booted out of Kingston’s Meadowbrook High School.) Enamored with metaphors, he frequently breaks from his rapid-fire patois to enunciate key words, and cites Biggie, ‘Pac, and DMX among his greatest influences (along with Bounty, Vybz, and Shabba Ranks). ‘Donia has also been a key proponent of mixtapes in Jamaica. With no album project officially announced at press time (he’s currently in discussions with VP, though no contracts have been signed), his latest mixtape effort, *Zinc Fence and Gunshot, Vol. 1*, offers a preview.

Dirty, hardcore treatises on the joys of punani, like last year’s lewd “Ukku” (with its “Aidonia...I wanna bone ya” lyric), will surely remain Aidonia’s calling card, but he says he’ll be cutting back on gun talk and taking a stab at cultural topics in the future.

“Everybody gotta come together fi make Jamaica better—the politician dem, the people dem, the teacher dem, the artist dem,” he says. “Right now they’re not coming together, and it really look bad. We need to start from new, basically—being an artist come with responsibility.”

www.vprecords.com, www.myspace.com/movadogangstaforlife, www.myspace.com/uhknoitsidonia



SPRAY IT DON'T SAY IT



A CULTURE MOST OF US HAVE GROWN UP WITH TURNS 40 SOON. SOME IDEAS ON WHAT'S BECOME OF GRAFFITI, WHERE IT'S GOING, AND WHETHER OR NOT ANYONE SHOULD CARE.
WORDS VIVIAN HOST

Pretty Boy showing off the tall Philly handstyle from *Public Wall Writing in Philadelphia*. (Photo courtesy Temple University Urban Archive)

Until graffiti as we know it turned 30 (around 2000 or so), it seemed to evolve as fast as the kids in the streets would let it. Inner-city 10-year-olds writing their names on abandoned buildings after school begat whole subway cars begat an even higher succession of bridges, ledges, and billboards. Clumsy tags turned into bubble-lettered throw-ups and colorful pieces turned into flawless 3-D fonts turned into elaborately deconstructed letters. Spraypaint became spraypaint with fat caps and skinny caps, became rollers, scribes, mops, etch, and a hundred other inexpensive solutions for causing major damage. A small world watched writers move from ingénues (a.k.a. “toys”) copying what they’d seen in *Style Wars* or on the streets or in ‘zines to masters of their own individual styles—or at least masters of getting away with murder (itself an expression of style).

But in the last 10 years graffiti appears to have slowed down. Not the volume of graffiti—if anything, the fact that it’s all over magazines, TV, clothing, *and* the legal wall of your favorite liquor store makes it more inescapable than ever. But to anyone other than the hardcore graffiti writer, it’s hard to see much changing. Are writers now stuck in a feedback loop, endlessly perfecting and refining lettering styles that came of age in the ’80s and ’90s? Is innovation in materials limited to just developing ever more damaging ink or crazier colors of paint? And if every fifth 18-year-old in the U.S. is tagging, then why does so much of it look the same... and so shitty at that?

Um, maybe that’s the point. “Things have separated so much between legal-and-pretty graffiti and ugly, street graffiti,” says Dan Murphy, who chronicles the infancy of Philly graffiti in *Public Wall Writing in Philadelphia*, his new book with Tony Smyrski. “Now people are *trying* to make their graffiti look scrappy and rushed. There’s this look that looks like vandalism and there’s a look that looks like friendly graffiti. People now are way more about vandalism than they were, so maybe that’s forward progress.”

Since it’s no longer uncommon for a casual tagger to become an artist with a gallery show—and as cities buff graffiti almost as soon as the paint’s dry—graffiti

purists are ever on the hunt for ways to make hard-won destruction obvious, and lasting. “The things Europeans do are totally insane,” cites Murphy. “People are all into bringing their own ladders and night-vision goggles. These Germans are making spraypaint in silver and black designed to cover large areas really quickly; the black is made out of some tar stuff so it’s hard to remove and it’s obviously for covering a train quickly. And of course there’s un-buffable, un-fadeable inks that work on nonporous surfaces like fiberglass or sheet metal.”

Communication technology like texting and GPS has no doubt helped plot new spots, and there have been early suggestions that computer technology may one day abet street graffiti (Hektor, a graffiti robot created by Swiss programmers Jurg Lehnli and Uli Franke comes to mind). Younger people also have more access to travel, making it ever more likely to see a graffiti writer from Copenhagen in San Francisco or a New Yorker in London. According to some, the availability of graffiti info in the mass media and on the internet makes kids get technically better faster, though they may lack points in essential departments like paying dues, racking [stealing], and humility.

“To me, the last great inventions were fire extinguisher tags, [which people started doing] like seven or eight years ago, and acid bath or etch. But I personally have not seen any great inventions in the last five years of graffiti,” says Roger Gastman, one of the culture’s most avid historians. “I like seeing people doing higher spots and more intricate stuff. I like seeing places where before someone might have been afraid to do a hollow throw-up on it, and now they’re doing a whole full-color piece—stuff that’s really in your face and it’s baffling how it was pulled off.”

As Gastman hints, even without access to high-tech materials, graffiti can always innovate in terms of risk. Now that penalties for getting caught include jail time more often than not, you could argue that continuing to do anything larger than a quick marker tag is a statement in and of itself (I won’t.) Then there’s London’s Banksy, who takes the graffiti writer’s traditional palette of skills and applies it

to even grander expressions of “Fuck you.” Ditto Barry “Twist” McGee, who’s gotten the “art establishment” to pay to install overturned, tagged-up delivery trucks outside his shows and fund stories-high graffiti pieces on the sides of museum buildings in Cincinnati and Detroit..

It’s a heated debate over whether graffiti in art galleries, books, and magazines is doing any good for a culture that has almost always been based around gaining fame, yet maintaining a certain anonymity. What is certain is that graffiti’s widespread presence is inspiring more people to do it. There are so many kids doing graffiti that it’s impossible to ever stop them all, and that number only increases each year. (Though graffiti writers have to go to greater lengths and break even their own rules to get noticed now.) Some say that street art (poster campaigns, stencils, stickers, wheatpastes)—“show-your-parents vandalism,” as Murphy calls it—is evolving the culture. For graffiti’s sake, I’ll stay out of that argument.

At the end of the day, graffiti is a bit like skateboarding. It’s so big, there are so many different people involved, and it’s meaning is so individual, that it might be impossible to say what is innovative or lasting.

“It’s for the youth to decide what it is and where it’s going,” concurs graffiti legend-turned-gallery legend Stephen “Espo” Powers. “The way I painted graf and the way I saw graffiti painted solved specific problems that were presented by surfaces and conditions; what they’re doing today is meant to meet surfaces and conditions today. Right now, there’s so much graffiti I hate but I think that’s so natural. It’s like my parents hating the music I’m into. But there are so many more innovations to be made. And for me graffiti is always the same. It’s like rock ‘n’ roll—there’s only three chords but there’s always something new.”

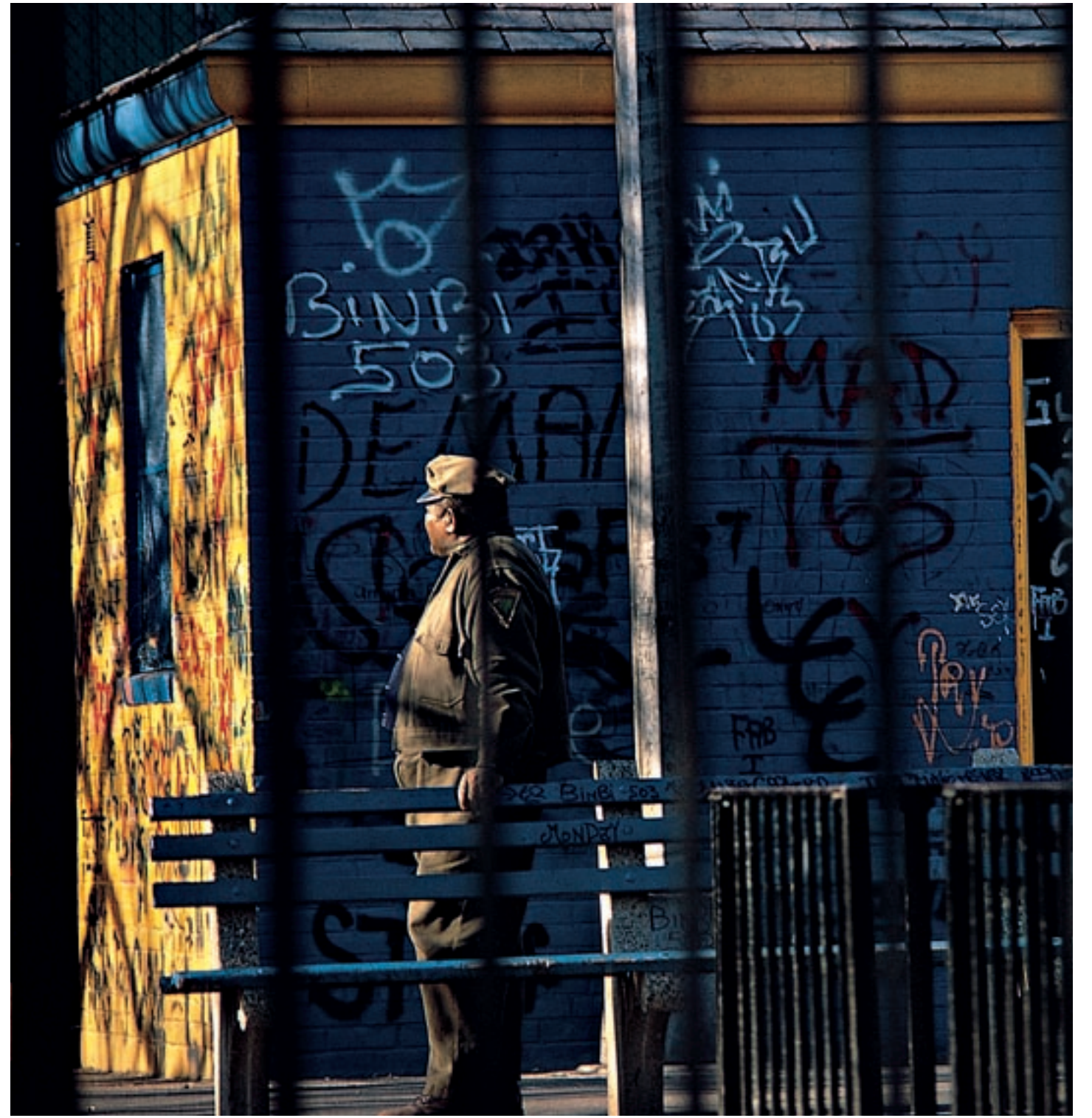
Thanks to Roger Gastman, Steve Grody, Sasha Jenkins, Dan Murphy, Jon Naar, and Steve Powers for providing insight for this piece. Photos taken from *Public Wall Writing in Philadelphia* (softcover; Free News Projects, \$20), *The Birth of Graffiti* (softcover; Prestel, \$24.95), and *Graffiti LA* (hardcover; Abrams, \$35). www.freenewsprojects.com, www.prestel.com, www.graffitila.com. View transcripts of these interviews online at www.xlr8r.com.



Philly SEPTA station from *Public Wall Writing in Philadelphia*. (Photo courtesy Temple University Urban Archive)



Star III (NYC, 1973) from *The Birth of Graffiti*. (Photo by Jon Naar)



Blue wall & attendant (NYC, 1973) from *The Birth of Graffiti*. (Photo by Jon Naar)



A tagged-up Philly underground station from *Public Wall Writing in Philadelphia*. (Photo courtesy Temple University Urban Archive)



California Bomb Squad piece by SKATE (LA, 1993) from *Graffiti LA*. (Photo by Steve Grody)



SABER piece on the LA River (LA, 1997) from *Graffiti LA*. (Photo by Steve Grody)



RISK piece (LA, late '80s). (Photo by RISKY)



SABER and REVOK piece at Wilshire Center (LA, 2003) from *Graffiti LA*. (Photo by Steve Grody)








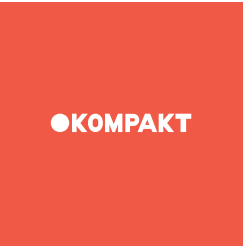
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Photo by Brian Tamborello



JIMMY TAMBORELLO TRIES HIS LUCK WITH ANOTHER PRE-POSTAL SERVICE, POP-INFUSED DELIVERY.

DNTEL
DUMB LUCK
Sub Pop/US/CD

We all know what happened last time Jimmy Tamborello dusted off his Dntel moniker. A few indie rockers showed up to the party, and an electro-pop phenomenon fit to soundtrack every car commercial in America was born. Death Cab for Cutie front guy Ben Gibbard's turn on "(This Is) The Dream of Evan and Chan" was the record's fan-fave, winning over legions of IDM-intrigued hipsters and prompting the duo to give their long-distance collab a full-length go. *Et voila*—The Postal Service's 2003 sleeper hit, *Give Up*.

A hundred covers of "Such Great Heights," a Honda Civic ad, and a few *Grey's Anatomy*s later, the dust has settled and Jimmy Tamborello is waiting with a star-studded new Dntel record, *Dumb Luck*. But what effect has the lulaballoo had on our hero?

To be fair, this isn't Tambo's first answer to the surge of success (he peeked his head out on the muddled 2006 James Figurine record *Mistake Mistake Mistake*). This is, however, his most substantial—in both content and context. Which is just to say, this is a careful, important-sounding record.

On *Dumb Luck*—a monument to strategically choreographed follow-ups—there's zero room for mistakes. Here, nothing is up to luck, every note is in its place, and every guest slot is filled with a Conor Oberst, a Jenny Lewis, or a Grizzly Bear. This Tamborello is determined to give those Postal-sized expectations a run for their money. And, really, he almost does.

"Roll On" is a fuzzy country-pop construction featuring vocals from Servicewoman Lewis, whose feet have been planted in rhinestone boots since leaving Rilo Kiley a couple years back. With her voice enveloped in a yawn of white noise and pinging synths, she *still* sounds like a cowpoke: a huge testament to Dntel's chameleonic skill—after all, there's no electro subgenre that incorporates the steel-stringed blues of Americana. "Dreams," with Mystic Chords of Memory, is old hat, comparatively. Likewise, Tamborello spit-shines Conor Oberst's digital urn on "Breakfast in Bed," breathing life into the same sort of tipsy electro that failed on Bright Eyes' foray into programmed beats and lap-pop, *Digital Ash in a Digital Urn*. Meanwhile, Lali Puna shows up on the Notwistian "I'd Like to Know," and Mia Doi Todd reprises her guest role on the crawling snapper "Rock My Boat."

Surprisingly, the only track Tamborello lends his vocals to is the most compelling. On the album's title track he sings, "*Just don't forget that it's dumb luck*

that got you here/Don't fool yourself, misfortune's waiting for the best time to appear/So make it clear that all the courage and the talent that you had was just in dreams/And when you wake up you will beg to get it back.

No, the fame certainly hasn't gone to his head; in fact, it's rattled him. Here, Tamborello's voice is fraught with resignation and concern; as the song hiccups around him, processed guitar jitters render his words even more awkward and hopeless. The discomfort frames the rest of the album nicely. In the scant moments we're allowed into Tamborello's psyche, his self-doubt brings *Dumb Luck*'s huge guest list into clearer (perhaps unbecoming, even desperate?) focus. But we only get this taste once. For the rest of the record, he's a vehicle. In the end, for all the care it takes, *Dumb Luck* falters by ignoring Tamborello himself. We can only hope that next time around, Dntel will start appreciating his own voice. *Robbie Mackey*



Distance

DISTANCE MY DEMONS

Planet Mu/UK/CD

With *My Demons*, Distance has created a powerful album that will fully appeal to the dubstep scene while reaching beyond its boundaries, a record that remains vibrant in mood and saturated with personality. His “Traffic” b/w “Cyclops” single of 2006 laid out a balanced blueprint for the album, and both tracks are included here. Tunes like “Ska” and “Confined” sound similar to the bombastic “Traffic,” where wild synths bruk out, tearing across jerking rhythms like a raging fire. “Tuning” and “My Demons,” like “Cyclops,” take the opposite route—they’re deep reflecting pools that hypnotize, drawing you close so that phantoms can tug at your aural consciousness. While the whole effect is closer to Kode 9 or Boxcutter than Digital Mystikz or Skream, at the end of the day this is a unique creation, another feather in Planet Mu’s cap, and a truly masterful piece of work. *Matt Earp*



8-BIT WE SOLD OUR SOULS FOR NOTHING

Ninjastar/US/CD
Since their “Ghettochip Malfunction” remix on Beck’s *Gameboy Variations* EP, 8-Bit has ridden a wave of hype leading up to *We Sold Our Souls for Nothing*, their third LP. Maintaining their reputation for fun, Nintendo-inspired beats, the band brings forth a successful production, but as rappers they fall flat. Sure, tracks like “Coke” and “Aw Hell Naw” are certified bangers, but the group’s lyrics are so steeped in wise-assery that the record quickly annoys. From the British-mocking “Krumpets” to potty-mouthed anthems like “Suckmadick,” *We Sold Our Souls* packs too much irony into its 40-minute runtime. *Josiah Hughes*



AESOP ROCK ALL DAY: NIKE + ORIGINAL RUN

Nike/US/download
Aesop Rock built this 45-minute track to entertain joggers and inspire them to buy lots and lots of Nikes. The track has most of the right elements, but the potholes tend to wear out the music’s momentum. Aesop hires an acid-rock band to play some downer blues, and there are moments when everything clicks, but his stress-rap rhymes are too fragmented and he overindulges in bugged-out synth wanks. This iTunes exclusive serves as better listening for the couch during drowsy, unemployed days than it does a morning run. *Cameron Macdonald*

ANTHONY B HIGHER MEDITATION

Greensleeves/UK/CD

Since his first hit, 1995’s “Fire Pon Rome,” this Trelawny native has become one of Jamaica’s most prolific, yet inconsistent, artists. On his 22nd solo joint, Anthony B reunites with U.K. producer Frenchie to create a more focused blend of conscious dancehall and roots reggae. He flows smoothly from the traditional sounds of “Just Can’t Live that Way” to the raucous bounce of “Real Warriors” (an inspired Turbulence collabo), and gives praise to Marcus Garvey on the record’s best track, “Honour to Marcus.” Despite the dreadful “Smoke Weed Everyday,” *Higher Meditation* packs as much heat as Anthony’s incendiary debut. *James Mayo*

A SUNNY DAY IN GLASGOW SCRIBBLE MURAL COMIC JOURNAL

Notenuf/US/CD

On *Scribble Mural Comic Journal*, A Sunny Day in Glasgow nods strongly to the ‘90s shoegazer era: pillowy melodies peek out behind heavy curtains of noisy distortion, while siblings Robin and Lauren Daniels float ethereal, Cocteau Twins-esque vocals above a throbbing electronic pulse. Such an ambitious blend of textures could easily sound distracting and gloopy; under the Daniels’ control, the result is something lush and vibrant, stirring up moods like potent elixirs. At other times, *Scribble* shows little interest in conventional harmonies; “The Horn Song” demonstrates just how easily the band can embrace their experimental side. *Janet Tzou*

BASSNECTAR UNDERGROUND COMMUNICATION

OM/US/CD

Bay Area DJ Lorin Ashton emerges again as his alter-ego Bassnectar, dropping 16 cuts destined for dancefloors. Throughout *Underground Communication* Ashton’s production hand proves as trustworthy as his DJ skills. Hip-hop melts into breaks, chest-throbbing basslines pump the heart chakra, and synth-oriented cascades ebb and flow beautifully. The title track, featuring a rugged flow by Seasunz, sets the stage; a variety of slick-slinging wordsmiths keep things moving. The disc gets repetitive midway through but then he drops his stellar remix of Cheb i Sabbah and puts everything immediately back on track. *Derek Beres*

BEAT PHARMACY STEADFAST

DeepSpace/US/CD

Brendon Moeller’s third album as Beat Pharmacy solidifies his position as America’s foremost techno-dub producer. His spacious sounds and panned echoes reverberate over a sparse framework of steady kick drums and pulsating, minimal bass tones. Fifteen years ago, his work might have been labeled “ambient dub”—a short-lived micro genre that gave birth to acts like Rockers Hi-Fi and Banco de Gaia. The difference on *Steadfast* is Moeller’s inclusion of overtly Rasta vocals from Judah Fyah, and deep house touches on “Drifter” and “Moog Dub.” Rain-soaked synths throughout add a balmy polish. Give this album a steadfast embrace. *Tomas Palermo*

BUNNY RABBIT LOVERS AND CRYPTS

VoodooEros/US/CD

Over beats produced by her girlfriend and sometime partner-in-rhyme Black Cracker, breathy-voiced Bunny Rabbit spits all sorts of game about strap-on dildos, ugly build-ings, shooting dolphins, and pretty much everything in between. It’s okay to label it Williamsburg-hipster-lesbian-erotica rap, but calling it hip-hop might be a little inaccurate; while Rabbit ostensibly raps, her vocals are way too low in the mix to be confused with what an MC does. Thought-provoking and musically original, *Lovers and Crypts* makes for an interesting first listen but, with the exception of “Lucky Bunny Foot,” it’s just not catchy enough to inspire a second. *Jesse Serwer*

TOM BURBANK FAMOUS FIRST WORDS

Planet Mu/UK/CD

Famous First Words is a nice debut from Venice, California’s Tom Burbank, combining a little bit of Ninja Tune-esque, chopped-up ambient (think Pest or Super Numeri) with Merck-y hip-hop beats (along the lines of Machinedrum) and a healthy dash of Planet Mu-style computer glitch. At its best—the infectious dancehall bounce of “Blabber Mouth,” the whine of “Gnats,” and the boom-in’ synths of “Knuckles”—the album is a slinky but chunky shuffle fest, perfect for either dancing or enthusiastic head-nodding. Occasionally it veers into easy-listening territory, but it’s a strong debut nonetheless. *Matt Earp*

BUSDRIVER ROADKILLOVERCOAT

Epitaph/US/CD

As Busdriver, a hip-hop lovin’ eccentric from L.A., Regan Farquhar’s talents have been lent to such absurd sonic ventures as The Unicorns’ post-breakup gag-gig Th’ Corn Gangg. His involvement in ridiculous one-off fuck-offs makes even more sense after listening to his Epitaph debut, *RoadKillOvercoat*—a surreal head-bobber laced with melody-following flow and postmodern peculiarities that rip holes through rhythms and breakbeats. It’s undie hip-hop for sure, but unlike his backpack brethren, Farquhar is more concerned with developing a distinct sound than bemoaning the state of indie-hop over broke-ass beats. *Robbie Mackey*

CADENCE WEAPON BREAKING KAYFABE

Upper Class/CAN/CD

Edmonton, Alberta-bred Rollie Pemberton (a.k.a. blog-championed Cadence Weapon) pops verses like it’s the Rock ‘Em Sock ‘Em Robots state championship. Cadence Weapon is the square root of Atmosphere’s highly personalized bitching mixed with Antipop Consortium’s ruff 8-bit glitches multiplied by Pharoahe Monch’s plaids and pinstripes. Hoarse layers are stitched into organic blueprints as Cadence spouts electro-cution across 12 condensed tracks (originally released in 2005 but hermetically sealed against staleness). Cadence Weapon’s overall presentation is as fricative as it is finessed, like bobbing graphite croutons in silica soup. *Tony Ware*

JARVIS COCKER JARVIS

Rough Trade/UK/CD

As Damon Albarn dabbles in pretentious super-groups and the Gallaghers wallow in boilerplate pub anthems, Pulp frontman Jarvis Cocker remains Britpop’s true gent, and a razor-sharp wit. *Jarvis*, his first solo album, finds the affable rogue performing with the perspective, and none of the baggage, of a seasoned artist. Clever observation, though not as much personal engagement, infuses tracks like “Black Magic” and the political “From Auschwitz to Ipswich.” Cocker adds details and pathos to finely crafted pop better than most. Decades into a career baptized during the birth pangs of post-punk, he shows more wisdom than wear. *Patrick Sisson*

COCOROSIE THE ADVENTURES OF GHOSTHORSE AND STILLBORN

Touch and Go/US/CD

Picking the individual contributions of Sierra and Bianca Casady out on CocoRosie’s third record is a little too easy. The controlled, theater-ready voice—the one that seemingly tiptoes up the horn of a Victrola—is Sierra’s. The marble-mouthed chatter, fighting off laughter at every turn? That’s Bianca. But this complimentary quality is at the core of everything CocoRosie does. With *Adventures*, these Brooklynites have created a record that trades in both gravity and flat-out fun; a good example being the lei-adorned rave-up “Japan,” whose lightheartedness feels free-wheeling and tossed off, until darkness descends and opera vocals swoop in. *Robbie Mackey*

CYRUS FROM THE SHADOWS

Tectonic/UK/CD

Cyrus has been on dubstep selectors’ radars since the early days of the genre’s second wave, but if you wanted to hear the goods, you usually had to find them on Joe Nice’s mixes. Tectonic’s first artist LP is all half-tempo cuts, very little melody, dry drums, almost no vocal samples, and all very claustrophobic. “Indian Stomp” rises above the rest with its playful clatter, but overall the album lacks the spark of dubstep’s recent output. For a label that’s been as adventurous as Tectonic, these tracks often don’t rise above DJ tools. *Matt Earp*

BETTY DAVIS BETTY DAVIS THEY SAY I’M DIFFERENT

Light in the Attic/US/CD

The fusion that Miles Davis created might not have been the same without the bold, sexually aware influences of his wife Betty. *Betty Davis* and *They Say I’m Different*, the re-released first two albums by this funk-soul iconoclast, are so radically sexualized and powerful that they hang like Sheela na Gigs over the past 30 years of music. The fanged funk of “You Won’t See Me in the Morning” and Davis’ growling glove-slap to pimpdom entitled “If I’m In Luck I Might Get Picked Up” are unnerving listens. But that doesn’t undermine their brilliance—it bolsters it. *Justin Hopper*

DÉBRUIT TO NARTIK KEF

Geostatism/FRA/CD

Clearly coming from the same school as TTC, Four Tet, Funkstorung, and other ADHD-addled cut-and-paste merchants, Débruit’s stuttering crunk-funk-electro-hop brings with it something infinitely exciting and surprisingly new. Perhaps it’s the producer’s clear appreciation (and plundering) of 20th century classical music, or the classy worldwide appeal achieved by the featured MCs from Spain, France, and the U.S., but whatever the case, the only complaint here is that at 34 minutes, there’s not enough *To Nartik Kef* to go around. *Brion Paul*

DIRTY DIGGERS THE PLEASURE IS ALL MINE

Zebra Traffic/UK/CD

For Brit-hop duo Dirty Diggers, those weekends at the flea market, flicking “*Past Lionel and Cher/To find a grimy snare*,” have all paid off in the form of *The Pleasure Is All Mine*. The pieces sound familiar: grime’s East London accent and signature flow; The Streets’ self-deprecating ordinariness; sample-heavy production à la People Under the Stairs. But the result is fresh—proof that underground U.K. hip-hop has a lot more than videogame basslines and East End gun boasts going for it. *Justin Hopper*

FROG EYES TEARS OF THE VALEDICTORIAN

Absolutely Kosher/US/CD

Fans have come to expect a particular brand of strange from Carey Mercer and his fellow Frogs. So the disjointed pop songs and lunatic rock suites on *Tears of the Valedictorian* aren’t as much red-faced surprises as comforting reassurances that last



Lady Saw

LADY SAW WALK OUT

VP/US/CD

Over the course of her long career, Lady Saw has always been known for her raw lyrics, but on *Walk Out*, she takes advantage of the full-length format to stretch out a bit. There are several heartfelt songs like “No Less Than a Woman” (inspired by her own infertility), “World’s Prettiest” (her take on women’s self-esteem issues), and “You Need Me,” a love song that could have come straight from Nashville. And while the album also includes her trademark sexed-up chunes (like the particularly slack “Power of the Pum” and “Like It,” a take on Dem Franchize Boyz’s “Oh I Think They Like Me”), she uses “Me and My Crew” to remind the listener that her first name is still “Lady,” stressing the importance of table manners and crossing one’s legs, and asking women to “please cut out the cheap dutty wine.” *Ross Hogg*



year's arty teaser EP, *The Future Is Inter-Disciplinary or Not at All*, was an aberration. Here, Mercer is still the straitjacketed poet, the manic preacher in the pulpit, and sprawling tracks like "Bushels" are still nine glorious minutes of caterwauling reverb and stiff-armed drumming. *Robbie Mackey*

GOSUB
WATCHERS FROM THE BLACK UNIVERSE

Taking the name of a computer language isn't the only tip-off that Miami electro producer Shad T. Scott is first and foremost a programmer: Scott's synth-heavy, analog-punctuated sound is clean and listenable, but most of the cuts on *Watchers From the Black Universe* sound crafted for mixing through a set, and less notable for their own individual ebb and flow. Scott—who co-piloted Miami's first electro-tech imprint, Isophlux—permits himself a healthy dash of campy fun on *Watchers*: "The Rain Comes Down" comes peppered with a grainy, old-school robotic overlay that affectionately recalls *Knight Rider*. *Janet Tzou*

GURU
JAZZMAZZ, VOL. 4
7 Grand/US/CD

While most people would prefer a new Gang Starr record, Guru has instead returned with another installment of his Jazzmatazz project, this time with Solar (who produced Guru's recent *Version 7.0*) at the boards. Unfortunately *Vol. 4* is concerned with reviving the Jazzmatazz name, not necessarily with preserving the legacy and feel of the classic first installment. There's a lack of collaborations with actual jazz artists, and the ones that do appear seem kind of haphazard: Instead of Roy Ayers we get David Sanborn. While there are some great tracks here, the point appears to be somewhat missed. *Jesse Serwer*



ANTHONY HAMILTON
SOUTHERN COMFORT
Merovingian/US/CD
Charlotte, NC native Anthony Hamilton has never had an issue with wearing his influences—Marvin Gaye, Donny Hathaway, Bill Withers—like a badge of honor. Indeed, he is carrying the torch for that Southern, gospel-inflected, blues-derived sound. What his latest lacks in coherence (it's a collection of unreleased tracks spanning years), it more than makes up for in the luster of this troubadour's smoky voice and brilliant songwriting. You can't miss his call-out to Curtis on "Don't Say What You Won't Do," nor will the hook of "Glad U Called" leave your mind anytime soon. *Derek Beres*

MIKE HANSEN
AT EVERY POINT
Etude/SPA/CD
Just when you thought that turntablists in the vein of Philip Jeck or Martin Tetrault couldn't take the experimental form any further, Toronto's Mike Hansen steps in with *At Every Point*, a five-part suite of rhythmic panning, jagged aural assaults, and deconstructionist *musique concrète*. Abstract turntablism has a nasty habit of taking itself too seriously, but that's not necessarily the case with Hansen; try on the rock-show tribute "Once Held A Lighter High in the Sky," that mimics crowd cheers while scribbling noisy guitar remnants all about the stratosphere—heady stuff. *Derek Grey*

ICON THE MIC KING
MIKE & THE FATMAN
Uprising/US/CD
Former battle champ iCon the Mic King and producer Chum the Skrilla Guerilla took a sizeable risk in making a concept album relatively early in their recording careers. While they include skits and the whole nine yards, what's frustrating about the blaxploitation-inspired *Mike & The Fatman* is how iCon doesn't always remain in character. Instead, this MC often uses his badass, Shaft-esque alter-ego to create a slight extension of his already-animated self atop Chum's robust, cinematic beats. There's no doubt iCon's on the right path with his inventiveness—now he just has to refine it. *Max Herman*

JIN
ABC
Crafty Catch/US/CD
You gotta feel for Jin. After a promising welcome by Ruff Ryders, this exceptional MC has been struggling to make his voice heard. *ABC* shows Jin going the way of Coco Lee—another Asian-American artist marketed to foreign audiences, rather than his US fans—a depressing reflection of the music industry's continuing attitude towards Asian-Americans in 2007. *ABC* cries for a stronger producer: Jin's raps surge with passion but require edits, with misdirected food references and a dated pop sensibility catering to overseas listeners. Don't give up, Jin: Asian-Ams will wait for your next American album, forever. *Janet Tzou*

KALABRESE
RUMPELZIRKUS
Stattmusik/GER/CD
Sascha Winkler was due for a full-length outing, and the wait has definitely been worth it. His snazzy, loosely shuffled production casually arranges found-sound fragments and bitmapped blooper behind an eclectic balance of organic instrumentation, inspiring subconscious booty wiggling that could turn lounge floors into dancefloors. Meanwhile, cuts like "Heartbreak Hotel" and "Body Tight" shift into sultry downtempo mode, ultimately shedding the notion of tempo altogether with the exotic interlude of "Hou Anthem." Winkler's opiate-like vocals can be an acquired taste for some, but the album's rich, tasteful character will undoubtedly help wash them down. *Doug Morton*

KHAN
WHO NEVER RESTS
Tomlab/GER/CD
What's up with Berliners ditching techno for electro-fried soul and funk albums lately? Ripping a distant page from city-mates Jamie Lidell and Moby, Can Oral (half of electro-trashers Captain Comatose) assumes his Khan persona for the relentlessly colorful *Who Never Rests*. Grinding his warble against grimy guitar strings like a pelvic thrust, Khan croons about making love in the drive-thru and spanking the monkey with intensity that teeters between sexy and absurd. Jams like "Excommunication" and the title track are legitimate bump-n-grinders; you'd be hard-pressed not to tug at your underpants just a *little* bit. *Anna Balkrishna*

KLAXONS
MYTHS OF THE NEAR FUTURE
Geffen/US/CD
These London lads did a great job of using glowsticks to convince folks they were the second coming of rave. Forget it. This is bloke-rawk that challenges the Arctic Monkeys and Maximo Park, but has lower self-esteem and higher-proof booze in its gut. "Atlantis to Interzone" is a death-disco stomp that punches clubbers before getting 86'd, and "Forgotten Works" is a fine post-punk ballad that crumples rose thorns in its hand. Despite those tracks, the record can sound bogged down by awkward rhythms and some sour ideas, but there's always remixers to keep Klaxons' myth alive. *Cameron Macdonald*

LANU
THIS IS MY HOME
Tru Thoughts/UK/CD
Aussie funksters The Bamboos made a worldwide splash last year with *Step It Up*. Now bandleader Lance Ferguson has his own thing going with the solo effort *This Is My Home*. His life-long love of playing music yields a remarkable depth and versatility that's all too rare; the production is hotter than the sun beaming on Ayers Rock in the outback. Choice collabs include homies Cherie Mathieson and No Comply on broken groover "Runaway," as well as Quantic and Aloe Blacc on the Afrobeat-tinged "Mother Earth." Throw this mutha on your barbie, mate! *Velanche*

LAUB
DEINETWEGEN
AGF Produktion/GER/CD
It's been five years since we heard from the post-techno duo Laub. Meanwhile, producer and poet/vocalist Antye Greie recorded a string of albums as AGF, guitarist and producer Jotka launched his own web-design firm, and both started families. And, oh yeah, they became blues musicians. Strange as that might seem, Jotka's weary, stripped-down licks à la John Lee Hooker and Muddy Waters (no samples here) slouch perfectly over crackling and popping minimal techno beats. And though she sings only in German, Greie's tough-edged voice nicely rounds out this great, slow-burning return. *Eric Smillie*

LICHENS
OMNS
Kranky/US/CD-DVD
Lichens' hymnodic *Omns* continues multi-instrumentalist Rob Lowe's quest for enlightenment via improvisation. A minimalist with un-hackneyed sacred leanings, Lowe uses guitar, voice, and myriad effects to achieve a mystical oneness with your (higher) mind. Lichens' recordings are conduits for others to join him on an ambitious journey to loftier levels of consciousness à la musicians like Terry Riley and Alice Coltrane. Subtler than any freak-folkie, Lichens evokes a sonic purity that could be the foundation of a new religion. *Omns'* spiritual profundity should convert even the staunchest skeptics. *Dave Segal*

MAXIMO PARK
OUR EARTHLY PLEASURES
Warp/UK/CD
Of the angular, poppy, post-punk bands spawned from England's Northwest lately, Maximo Park always seemed the likely lads to make it; the band is fluidly able to combine interesting rhythms and sounds with instantly accessible pop hooks. But on *A Certain Trigger*, Maximo seemed to be holding out on us. Obviously they were: "Our Velocity," *Our Earthly Pleasures'* first single, is like a speeding, Northern Nirvana—slick production and poppy synths belying fresh, furious rawness. There are other great moments—like the shift from angles to anthem on "A Fortnight's Time." Even *Pleasures'* lower points are flecked with specks of greatness. *Justin Hopper*

MINI
AUDIO HYGIENE
NRG Komrads/CAN/CD
Mini might revive the electroclash spirit of '01, but the Montreal DJ wisely avoids plenty of its "don'ts." She ditchs irony-chic, instead making dirty electro that's both tuneful and intoxicated. The sputtering, clotted grooves of "Blue Velvet" burn cigarettes on skin, while "This is Now" grinds under a deft Spanish rap. Mini also translates brooding synth-pop into hazy subway atmospherics on "Wagon." However, rigor mortis-stiff ballads like "Walking" come across as tepid, Ladytron-lite misfires. Nonetheless, *Audio Hygiene* could've enlightened more souls if it came before Larry Tee patented that goddamn Electroclash™ word. *Cameron Macdonald*

MIST:ICAL
THE ELEVENTH HOUR
Soul:R/UK/CD
The moment you hear MC DRS ask "Is drum & bass in its final hour?" on this disc's title track, it becomes obvious that what will follow isn't going to be your typical album. As longtime fixtures within the drum & bass community, Mist:ical (a.k.a. Marcus Intalex, Calibre, and ST:Files) could have easily produced a risk-free record that stayed neatly within the lines. Instead they throw down the gauntlet to a scene that has lost its risk-taking spirit, with guest performances from DRS, Robert Owens, Ras-T-Weed, and the legendary Diane Charlemagne. *Jason "Method One" Leder*

CARLOS NIÑO & MIGUEL ATWOOD-FERGUSON
FILL THE HEART SHAPED CUP
Alpha Pup/US/CD
Some albums evoke a sense of place so strongly that it's hard to imagine they were created elsewhere. So goes *Fill the Heart Shaped Cup*, birthed in L.A. by Carlos Niño and violinist/violist Miguel Atwood-Ferguson, but nonetheless carrying the ethereal, lightly frosted fantasia of Iceland. Breaking past his hip-hop productions for Ammoncontact and Daedelus, Niño channels Northern artists like Múm and electronic-orchestral composer Jóhann Jóhannsson to arrive at billowing sheets of emotional sound. Daybreak dawns by the tide of strings and bells in the aptly titled "Triumph," which ends far too quickly two minutes in. *Anna Balkrishna*



Peter Bjorn & John

PETER BJORN & JOHN
WRITER'S BLOCK
Witchita-V2/US/CD
For a second, let's just pretend Peter Bjorn & John's ubiquitous whistling song never existed. Without "Young Folks," *Writer's Block* would be another admittedly solid installment in the catalog of a Swedish post-twee band destined for also-ran status. But revisionism ain't for me. "Young Folks" is alive and well here, standing tall and proud over the rest of *Writer's Block*, its mere presence making the entire record stronger. But even though the single does its share of album-eclipsing, the rest of *Writer's Block's* 11 songs find Peter Moren, Bjorn Yttling, and John Eriksson at their creative best. From the reverbed rumbling of "Objects of My Affection" to the jangling plod of "Start to Melt," *Writer's Block* is filled with smartly written, immediately endearing indie pop. *Robbie Mackey*



Plan B

PLAN B
WHO NEEDS ACTIONS WHEN YOU GOT WORDS
Cordless/US/CD
He's white. He raps. And he talks dirty. No wonder Ben Drew (a.k.a. Plan B) is being sold as the British Eminem. The comparison isn't entirely off, but Drew's far from a clone. A grime MC, Drew has some of hip-hop's usual (and boring) obsession with bravado, violence, and penises (he calls listeners "fucking cunts" about 10 seconds in), but he's aware of his obsession. Sometimes that comes across as insightful, sometimes trite. Opener "Kidz" is cliché, painting dark images of youth and then lamenting, Oprah-like, "that's the mentality of kids today" (contrast that with the unapologetically violent Clipse, who sound much better for it). And "Charmaine," about a young girl, sounds forced. But lyrical flaws aside, his delivery is rhythmically absorbing, and the tracks themselves are well-crafted, with fresh beats and acoustic guitars playing off his own harshness for added complexity. *Luciana Lopez*



WAX POETIC
COPENHAGEN
ISTANBUL
Nublu/US/CD
Nublu is a saving grace in the gentrified New York musical atmosphere. This East Village landmark, started by İlhan Ersahin in 2002, has spawned an incredible amount of talent, including the Brazilian Girls, Kudu, and Forro in the Dark. While Ersahin, a Turkish-born saxophonist/keyboardist, goes under many guises, he's best known as Wax Poetic. He stays sharp through industrious globetrotting, showcased here in a pair of live shows in Copenhagen and Istanbul. He refines a bit of the old Wax sound in Denmark, with the soulful, playful dexterity of vocalist Marla Turner. The set is governed by catchy songwriting with plenty of room for improvisation—and that's good, because Ersahin is never the same from night to night. Returning home, his more experimental side emerges, letting trigger pads and effects vibrate through a host of incredibly tight drumbeats and smooth ivory tinkling. *Derek Beres*

TUJIKO NORIKO
SOLO
Editions Mego/UK/CD
Not unlike Tujiko Noriko's collaboration with Aoki Takamasa, *Solo* is a lush amalgamation of synth pads, off-time percussion, and Tujiko's serene vocals. But on her third full-length for Editions Mego (formerly Mego), Tujiko's experimental-pop production reaches levels of maturity yet unheard, with added layers of strings, guitars, and affected noises springing up throughout. Although *Solo* isn't necessarily an enormous departure from her prior work, tracks like "I Love You" and "Ending Kiss" find the veteran bellowing with the same strife as Blonde Redhead's Kazu Makino, uniquely complimenting her always-evolving and blossoming productions. *Fred Miketa*

NOSTALGIA 77
EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN
Ubiquity/US/CD
Is this Benedic Lamdin's best record? Who knows. But does the guy fronting Nostalgia 77 make the trifecta? You betcha. Known for blissful excursions in cosmic-jazz and be-bop with a decidedly hip-hop slant, Lamdin always emphasized the instrumental, but with his two muses, Lizzy Parks and Beth Rowley, he's learned to let the magic of the voice be his instrument. And grind their vocal axes, these ladies do, putting them on par with the record's mind-blowing tenor sax and trumpet playing, which not only gives you sketches of Spain but crisp laser copies of Mars too. *Daniel Sivek*

NUBLU ORCHESTRA
NUBLU ORCHESTRA CONDUCTED BY BUTCH MORRIS
Nublu/US/CD
If Nublu Orchestra sounds like a bunch of musicians were tossed into a room and told to start playing... well, maybe that's what happened. Composed of members from a range of bands (from Brazilian Girls to Forro in the Dark), Nublu merges blippy electronics with improv jazz (the real stuff, not diluted) with instruments and melodies surfacing and receding. The result can be overly intellectual (their bio includes a long-winded explanation of Butch Morris' "conduction"), but when it comes together, as on "Here Comes the Man," it sounds beautifully unrestrained and genuinely new. *Luciana Lopez*

PELICAN
CITY OF ECHOES
Hydra Head/US/CD
There is epic music and then there is *epic* music. Chicago instrumental quartet Pelican is proudly guilty of producing the latter, penning tunes so ambitious and triumphant that your everyday life seems insignificant in comparison. Simply put, they rock harder than similarly motivated Texans Explosions in the Sky and are more melodious and listenable than like-minded Japanese trio Boris. "Cinematic" is an understatement, unless your idea of movie night is 24 straight hours of Kurosawa and Peckinpah. And while *City of Echoes* occasionally shows their more temperate side, it is nonetheless a classic third album—coherent and explosive. *Steve Marchese*

POLE
STEINGARTEN
~scape/GER/CD
Nearly a decade ago, Stefan Betke (a.k.a. Pole) translated dub into a permanent midnight of Cold War ghosts drifting through the Berlin streets. In *Steingarten*, he crafts a bright, minimalist-funk suite that saunters along on eight legs, and often acts like it's being fried under a magnifying glass. "Jungs" is a kling-klang groove in an arson-lit disco, and "Mädchen" has a dub rhythm that lurches forth with one eye over its shoulder, but the climax, "Düsseldorf," is a microhouse groove that actually smiles for just being alive. *Steingarten* makes Pole a standard from whom to steal ideas again. *Cameron Macdonald*

RICHIE SPICE
IN THE STREETS TO AFRICA
VP/US/CD
On only his fourth proper artist album, Jamaica's Richie Spice (né Richell Bonner) has done the improbable: He delivers a roots album that avoids sermonizing and encapsulates modern reggae flawlessly. It seemed audacious when VP signed the relatively obscure singer to a multi-album deal last year, but Spice succeeds, following up *Spice in Your Life* with an equally *heartical* recording. Guests like the late Joseph Hill of Culture, and Spice's musical siblings Pliers and Spanner Banner, offer solid accompaniment, while producers Clive Hunt, Donovan Bennett, and Bobby Konders provide rock-solid riddims. It's a bona fide reggae masterpiece. *Tomas Palermo*

SCHNEIDER TM
SKODA MLUVIT
City Slang-Wichita/US/CD
There are two Dirk Dresselhauses—the brilliant lap-pop wunderkind, and the self-impressed packrat. Sure, the former indie boy and German Pro Tooler occasionally stumbles over outright brilliance (as he did on the spit-shine remix of The Smiths' "There Is a Light..." on 2000's *Binocular*). But just as often, the Schneider TM mastermind gets lost in his own clutter and abstraction. On his latest, *Skoda Mluvit*, both Dresselhauses show up. The single, "Pac Man/Shopping Cart," is his most inspired work since *Zoomer*, but the rap-happy "Blacksmith" and slogging album-opener "More Time" are alternately embarrassing and useless. *Robbie Mackey*

SNOWGOONS
GERMAN LUGERS
Babygrande/US/CD
Don't let the name fool you—The Snowgoons aren't the latest powder-pushing hip-hop act. What they are is a gifted group of German beat-makers who use their debut album to showcase hard-hitting collaborations with 25-plus MCs from Philly, Boston, the Bronx, and beyond. With the sheer amount of guests and tracks, this release feels a bit overcrowded. But among the clutter, it's not hard to find a number of East Coast-flavored gems like the xylophone-driven "Teacher's Trademark," featuring a sharp-as-ever Wise Intelligent of Poor Righteous Teachers. *Max Herman*

STARS OF THE LID
AND THEIR REFINEMENT OF THE DECLINE
Kranky/US/2CD
Since 1993, the duo of Brian McBride and Adam Wiltzie has been at the forefront of the drone movement. *And Their Refinement of the Decline* is not only their first studio album in six years, it's also the 100th release from seminal experimental imprint Kranky. Fittingly, the record is a subdued *chef d'œuvre*, exploring frail melodies and dense soundscapes in equal strokes. From the opening horns of "Dungtitled (In A Major)" to the closing rumbles of "December Hunting for Vegetarian Fuckface," *Refinement of the Decline* is a two-hour juggernaut of careful dynamics and warm tones. *Josiah Hughes*

THE BLOW
POOR AIM: LOVE SONGS
K/US/CD
Originally released in 2004, The Blow's *Poor Aim: Love Songs* is an electro-pop record that could fare as well on MTV2 as on any late-night college radio show. But on this reissue, the Portland duo invites some company over, in the form of remixes from Lucky Dragons, Strategy, YACHT, and others. The end result of this unexpected treat from Olympia-based indie stalwart K Records is a twisted blend of synth-pop paired with the hits of Justin Timberlake. The Blow may change the way diehards view K releases, and make punks and club kids dance together. *Fred Miketa*

THE GANG FONT
FEATURING INTERLOPER
Thirsty Ear/US/CD
Not since early-'90s jazz-core outfit Iceburn has a band fused punk and jazz so well. Featuring Hüsker Dü's Greg Norton, The Gang Font is a math-rock band that employs jazz drumming and improvisational guitar riffs to produce interstellar progressive rock that deviates from anything Thirsty Ear has offered in the past. While rock bands from Titan to Hella proudly trumpet their prog influences, The Gang Font fits more in line with The Mahavishnu Orchestra teaming up with Dave Brubeck than the band's psych-math contemporaries. *Featuring Interloper* might be the end-all for tech-music nerds everywhere. *Fred Miketa*

THE GO FIND
STARS ON THE WALL
Morr Music/GER/CD
One measure of a successful label is the presence of a signature sound. Berlin's Morr Music certainly has one, represented dutifully by The Notwist, Lali Puna, Styrofoam, and now The Go Find, the pseudonym of Belgium's Dieter Sermeus. His second album for Morr is a pastiche of gentle pop songs and subtle electronics but what differentiates it from, say, Ms. John Soda is a more organic singer-songwriter sensibility. *Stars on the Wall* isn't quite coffeehouse material, but it's intimate and amenable at first approach and softens with successive listens. *Steve Marchese*

THE SEA AND CAKE
EVERYBODY
Thrill Jockey/US/CD
The Sea and Cake rightfully deserve their designation as elder statesmen of the Chicago art-pop landscape. This time out, Sam Prekop and company return in an older, more perceptive incarnation of the band, eschewing the electronic flourishes of past releases for a more classic sound reminiscent of their self-titled debut. The difference here is clearly refinement. Never has the guitar playing of Archer Prewitt and Sam Prekop sounded so in-sync and sophisticated. And bassist Eric Claridge and drummer John McEntire continue a legacy of stylish understatement. *Everybody* proves there's plenty left in Chicago's prodigal sons. *Steve Marchese*

THE ZINCS
BLACK POMPADOUR
Thrill Jockey/US/CD
Since 2005's *Dimmer*, The Zincs have proven to be quite the shape-shifters. Moving from a spacious acoustic sound into darker, more unsettling power-pop, The Zincs sound like the bastard children of Joy Division and a loungier Pulp. All comparisons aside, *Black Pompadour* finds strength in intricate guitar work that shifts from classic-rock riffs to swelling surf leads. But given the album's instrumental dynamics, James Elkington's semi-monotone vocals don't always match up with the songs. Regardless, The Zincs possess the fire of '80s-era Rough Trade stars, worthy of much more than a passing glance. *Fred Miketa*

THEE MORE SHALLOWS
BOOK OF BAD BREAKS
Anticon/US/CD
Thee More Shallows is a San Franciscan trio that squeezes electronic and acoustic sounds into some fascinating songs. *Book of Bad Breaks*, like their last LP, *More Deep Cuts*, is both minimal and incredibly layered. "Night at the Knight School" and "Fly Paper" have moments of serenity followed by combustion, while "Eagle Rock" stands strong with quirky lyrics. Aside from "Mo Deeper" and "Chrome Caps," where the droning sounds can grow tiresome, *Book of Bad Breaks* packs a punch for this band's Anticon debut. *David Ma*

TRACEY THORN
OUT OF THE WOODS
Virgin/US/CD
Tracey Thorn seems nostalgic for Britain's melancholic new wave. And who can blame her? As the boisterous glare of Lily Allen & Co. takes over British pop, the subtle balladeer that Thorn represented in Everything But The Girl has slipped even deeper into the shadows. Thorn's new disc—which includes production and writing help from Ewan Pearson, Metro Area's Darshan Jesrani, and others—proves there's plenty of room for both. With warm electro and synth-pop sounds and EBTG-esque house beats, the disc shimmers with lamentation and shines with regret: A masterwork of forging beautiful pop from England's permanent sense of woe. *Justin Hopper*

AMON TOBIN
FOLEY ROOM
Ninja Tune/UK/CD
Advancing far beyond his sound-manipulation past, Amon Tobin has created an experimental masterpiece of cinematic proportions. *Foley Room* (the space where



EVIDENCE
THE WEATHERMAN LP
ABB/US/CD
Listening to Evidence's solo debut, *The Weatherman*, is almost like discovering this L.A. hip-hop vet for the first time. After dropping backpacker-friendly jams with the Dilated Peoples for over a decade, we have come to know much about Ev the MC and producer, but not much about Ev the man. With candor, Evidence reveals how his mom's passing left him in a daze ("I Still Love You") and, with Atmosphere's Slug, vents about the danger of fame-chasing friends ("Line of Scrimmage"). But as much as we learn about the rapping producer's life, this album isn't entirely comprised of weighty introspection. The booming, synth-heavy single "Mr. Slow Flow," for one, plays out like an anything-goes freestyle, ready to be bumped in the whip. With assistance from producers The Alchemist, Joey Chavez, and others, Evidence successfully steps out for a revelatory solo mission without losing sight of his roots. *Max Herman*



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II REVIEWS II ALBUMS

sound effects are recorded for films) sequences source material (wasps buzzing, tigers roaring, chickpeas falling) and then distorts and manipulates it into epic piano-driven scores. Tobin's strength as a composer is best illustrated on the track "Straight Psyche," a drone-heavy Krautrocker that moves from arpeggio guitars through densely reverberated drums and into schizophrenic vocal whispers—all while keeping a loose groove that rekindles the trippiest moments of Can. *Fred Miketa*

TRACK N FIELD MARATHON

Nine2Five/FIN/2CD

With *Marathon*, Finnish producers Roberto Rodriguez and Jukka Kaartinen prove that good things come to those who wait. Track N Field's simmering musical development has resulted in this 20-track debut that spans two CDs. Its foundation in old-school downtempo is complimented by bossa nova, dub, breaks, house, and more. The moody, cinematic title track is a beautifully dark head-nodder that could seemingly go on for ages. *Marathon* is bound to endure long after crossing the finish line. *Velanche*

TTC

3615 TTC

Big Dada/UK/CD

Exuding a Beasties-like fuck-it-all attitude while spitting over glinting synthetic beats, TTC MCs Cuiziner, Tido Berman, and Teki Latex are verbal jesters that come off about as hard as a slice of brie. But while the French trio's flow can occasionally be halting, the buoyant beats and Euro-syle production on their third album translates well. "Ambition" is all slowed-down Vangelis steez, the streamlined beat of "Paris Paris" has an Eliot Lipp-like swagger, and the slow-mo "Turbo" sounds like they sampled M83 instead of dusty soul records. *Patrick Sisson*

CAETANO VELOSO CÊ

Nonesuch/US/CD

After the unfortunate malaise of English cover songs this great Brazilian singer attempted in 2004, *Tropicalia* provocateur Caetano Veloso again flexes in true form, proving he hasn't lost touch with the searing guitar riffs and sweet, slightly off-kilter falsetto vocals that made him a global icon. Credit is equally due to his son, Moreno, whose production efforts make *Cê* top notch. Caetano's still got his way with the ladies, apparent on these luscious ballads, but it's the hyper "Odeio" and screeching, Os Mutantes-esque throwback "Rocks" that take us back a few decades. *Derek Beres*

STEPHEN VITIELLO

LISTENING TO DONALD JUDD

Sub Rosa/BEL/CD

Sculptor Donald Judd could radically alter a bare room's mood just by placing a simple box in the right place. Sound designer Stephen Vitiello explores the audio spaces that Judd's sculptures inhabit in a Texas town by attaching microphones to their surfaces, capturing whatever vibrations pass through. It's an intriguing idea, but the result is an otherwise generic *musique concrète* mix. There are a few strong moments of broken, droning electricity invading pastoral scapes of birdsong and trains passing through, but the over-indulgence of boiling hums and erratic pacing often makes everything seem hollow and emotionally lost. *Cameron Macdonald*

VLADISLAV DELAY WHISTLEBLOWER

Huume/FIN/CD

Sasu Ripatti's latest recording as Vladislav Delay sounds not so much like a divergence from the recordings made under his Luomo alter-ego as a painstaking reconstruction of sounds (scrapes, squelches, drones, thuds) sheared and shaved from the Finnish producer's metropolitan microhouse project—a new artifact sculpted from the same (ice) block, as it were. Yet "Stop Talking," "I Saw a Polysexual," and "He Lived Deeply" aren't mere scraps or experiments in superfluity. Rather, *Whistleblower* is mesmerizing, evocative, and, curiously, unexpectedly beautiful. *David Hemingway*

STEWART WALKER CONCENTRICITY

Persona/GER/CD

Celebrating 10 years as a leader in all things techno, this seasoned veteran delivers a journey through delicate melodies, drifting pads, and emotional soul. Further developing the minimal Berlin sound, the tracks here stick to a skeletal structure while making novel use of subtle clicks, dissonant keys, and hazy synth tones. The percussive ele-

ments remain simple and tight while bits and pieces of reversed stabs, reverb-soaked chords, and hollow hits bring you through an after-hours session worthy of 8 a.m. on the shores of Ibiza. *Praxis*

WELCOME SIRS

FatCat/UK/CD

Lauded by both bloggers and U.K. glossies like *Mojo*, *Sirs*, from the Seattle-based quartet Welcome, deserves its accolades. Welcome's music transports you to London's UFO club circa 1967, when LSD was potent and minds were never more open. The disc's 10 songs assimilate their psych-pop influences—The Creation, Syd's Pink Floyd, and '66-'68 Beatles—with aplomb. Scathing guitars, corrosive fuzz bass, swerving dynamics, and swoonsome boy/girl vocals coalesce into tracks at once ethereal and rambunctious, tuneful and oblique. *Dave Segal*

PATRICK WOLF THE MAGIC POSITION

Low Altitude/US/CD

Few 23-year-olds can match pipes and world-weariness with Marianne Faithfull, but Brit crooner Patrick Wolf nearly does just that on "Magpie," a track from his stellar third album. The grim, piano- and string-drenched duet exemplifies Wolf's baroque-pop style, filled with bursting crescendos, orchestral swells, and anguished poetry. Wolf can channel Antony's drama, but his commanding delivery isn't nearly as fragile. And on cathartic stompers like "Get Lost" and the title track, he gets deliciously delirious. A few production tweaks let you know the album is of its time, but his words and delivery are timeless. *Patrick Sisson*



STAR YOU STAR ME SIMPLE THINGS

Forcetracks/GER/CD

Finns making disco-soul as Star You Star Me release six years of work in one album, and Forcetracks begins to seem like the LVMH of techno labels. Forcetracks' output is elegant and addictive, sparkling like champagne. *Simple Things* is your spring hobo bag, if you will, and—like well-tailored editions from MRI, Luomo, and SCS1-9 that came before—you must have it. The best tracks here add human voices, and love evades them all. Vocalist Jeny asks, "Why must all sweet things go?," turning her back on dance partner Erlend Øye, while on "Burden," Nega is plagued by unrequited love as he sings against a synth-pop backdrop that's gold-chain garish, and utterly moving. Star You Star Me's goal of making music that's "momentous" has been met, and the best thing is, you can really afford it. *Rachel Shimp*

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UGLY
PEOPLE WILL STARE

CONS

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what moves you



Comp Reviews 5.07



BIRTHDAY SURPRISES FROM A MIDWEST COLLEGE TOWN'S INDIE POWERHOUSE

SC100
Secretly Canadian/US/CD

While it seems distantly quaint now, the college radio scene of the early '80s has proven to be one of the most important touchstones of the last 30 (and probably the next 30) years of music. In tiny college towns across America, where world wide web networks were but a Flickr in computer- and library-science majors' minds, indie record labels (mostly of the hardcore and power-pop variety) began sprouting up around those 100-watt campus stations, using hardwired telephones, ye olde postal service, and shitty vans to spread a new rock 'n' roll gospel. It's a wonder the whole plan ever got off the ground, when you think about it, but the DIY ethic spawned more than just a new aesthetic and way of doing business: the waves were set in perpetual motion for the next round of big-thinking indies of the '90s. Eleven years after its inception, Bloomington, Indiana's Secretly Canadian is one of that era's (and college rock's) great successes.

Unlike Matador, or other indies who sought greater exposure through the distribution wings of major labels, SC built its own little empire out of an Indiana University dorm room, growing extra limbs like Jagjaguwar, Brah! Records, and—most recently—Dead Oceans, and distributing other indie stalwarts like K and Table of the Elements, all the while amassing small-scale hits (in the CMJ-chart sense) from the likes of Songs: Ohia, June Panic, Scout Niblett, and Antony and the Johnsons.

What's strange, then, is that *SC100*, the label's commemorative 100th CD release, isn't just a navel-gazing grab bag of the roster's finest past offerings. Instead, 18 of the label's marquee names have taken a pick-from-the-hat approach to covering 18 random SC songs, and the results are as stunning as anything in the catalog.

Fittingly, *SC100* kicks off with the recently deceased Nikki Sudden—the cofounder of home-tapers Swell Maps, and an icon of the early college radio days if there ever was one—cov-

ering flagship Secretly Canadian artist June Panic's Dylan-goes-electric rocker "See[ing] Double." It's immediately followed up by Songs: Ohia reinterpreting Sudden's "The Last Bandit," a subdued scrap of piano-guitar power-pop that clocks in at a short 1:34, nailing Sudden's quick-shot style that eschewed the self-serving fat of rock riffs in favor of whittling down the tune to its barest essentials. At other points, the label's Americana-folk history is laid bare, and there are even poppier offerings from (relative) newcomers like Jens Lekman, who sounds like he's about to cover "Needles and Pins" when he attempts Scout Niblett's "Your Beat Kicks Back Like Death."

While there's a dedication to preserving the label's "indie" sound, one that has traditionally relied more on the guitars-drums-bass setup and less on electronic or noisy elements, bits of experimentation are nicely peppered throughout *SC100*, such as Early Day Miners taking on avant-gardists Suzanne Langille and Loren Mazzacane Connors' aching dirge "The Escape." Similarly, Dave Fischhoff gives folk troubadour Damien Jurado a dusty, organ-and-drum-machine treatment on the captivating "Abilene," perhaps the disc's strongest entry, and the feral-sounding Racebannon doesn't disappoint with a jagged Swearing at Motorists retake.

Listeners are left with a uniquely telling, representative, and not-even-partially rehashed survey of Secretly Canadian's delights. Let it be an incentive to dig back into the catalog for the archived treats that the label so teasingly dangles in front of our ears. *Ken Taylor*



Jens Lekman

ÂME...MIXING

Sonar Kollektiv/GER/CD

Jazzanova's Sonar Kollektiv imprint has flourished since its inception nearly a decade ago, and their newest mixed comp is a fine example of why: Âme's Kristian Beyer and Frank Wiedemann pluck their tracks from the very community of electronic peers that the Kollektiv has helped foster. Chateau Flight's "Baroque" showcases I:Cube and Gibb'r in a hip-twerking, Detroit-kissed tech-house mood, while the exceptional Lucien Nicolet demonstrates his lush, deeply rhythmic techno production skills on "Flashback 86." *Mixing* fuses good vibes with good tunes: Like, if these guys are going for a pint afterwards, you most definitely want to join. *Janet Tzou*

BACKSPIN: A SIX DEGREES 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY PROJECT

Six Degrees/US/CD

San Francisco label Six Degrees has been putting out world music with a tech twist for a decade now. Their roster has advanced both world music and electronic music culture by fusing global beats with technology. Oddly enough, they celebrate their forward-thinking philosophy with a covers album. Banco de Gaia takes on Pink Floyd's "Echoes," while tabla titan Karsh Kale versions The Police's "Spirits in the Material World." But did we really need another Police song from Los Mocosos? And where on earth is the label's hero, Cheb i Sabbah? *Daniel Sivek*

BACK TO MINE: RÖYKSOPP

DMC/CD/UK

So good it'll make you want to kit up in North Face gear and move to Bergen, Röyksopp's *Back to Mine* works both as a schematic of the duo's musical DNA and as a pure joy in its own right. Tracks like Edgar Winter's "Over & Over" and I Level's "3am Give Me" sound like catalysts for Röyksopp's own *Melody AM* and *The Understanding*, others (Klein & MBO's "Dirty Talk," Guy Dalton's "Night People [New York Club Mix]") are more like straight-forward invites to lose it under some disco-light approximation of the aurora borealis. Brilliant. *David Hemingway*

BPC CAMPING COMPILATION 03

BPitch Control/GER/CD

The new BPitch status report is looking good. Old-schoolers like Ben Klock, Sascha Funke, and Paul Kalkbrenner deliver standard BPC techno while Modeselektor and Feadz keep the label's funky, manic, Berlin style going. While newcomers Zander VT and Larsson inspire little more than a narcoleptic nod, the emotive grandeur of Sylvie Marks & Hal 9000's "Strahlen" and the fresh chemistry of "Red Planets" by Ellen Allien & Apparat affirm the comp's indispensability. Pinched at each end by guests Jahcoozi and Fairmont, *Camping 03* is an exclusive celebration of BPC's high-bar eclecticism. *Doug Morton*

CLOUD CONTROL

Broken Fader Cartel/US/CD

Lock up your laptops, there's an old-fashioned '96 IDM revival happening—in North Carolina! Spread across 15 tracks, *Cloud Control* is both a survey and blender of the history of experimental electronic music, with this upstart label referencing and reformulating myriad highlights of the last 15 years of the noodly, cryptically named genre. From Tudikas Wayne Hunnicutt's ephemeral dreamscapes to a grime-dripped Amen splatter from subQtaneous, the distinct vision of each particular artist is maintained throughout. *Cloud Control* is an auspicious debut from an unlikely place. *Brian Paul*

DEEP AND SEXY 4: COMPILED AND MIXED BY KING BRITT

Wave/US/CD

Give your dance compilation a title as clichéd as *Deep and Sexy* and the music better be more amazing than a Democratic Presidential victory in 2008. Frankly, with compiler King Britt coming off a mediocre Detroit-techno stint as Nova Dream Sequence, I wasn't sure this outing would be either deep or a winner. But over 12 blended tracks by artists like Tom & Joyce, Onda, Markus Enochson, and Britt's own Scuba alias, the Philly soul brother mixes delicious vocals and colorful instrumentals into a tuneful set of lush house music. The title is apt, and Britt doesn't disappoint. *Tomas Palermo*

ECCENTRIC SOUL: TWINIGHT'S LUNAR ROTATION

Numero Group/US/CD

Most of the tracks on this double disc—'60s and '70s soul/funk jams from Twinight (sometimes called "Twilight") Records—didn't get play until after the midnight hour, hence the title *Lunar Rotation*. The graveyard shift is where coulda-been hits usually go to die, but now this Chi-town outfit's output has been resurrected by the reissue-happy Numero Group. It appears that maybe artists like Renaldo Domino, with his Smokey Robinson-like smoothness, and Chuck & Mac, whose urgent and pungent "Powerful Love" got me laid, were just too real for radio, making *Eccentric Soul* a most welcome release. *Daniel Sivek*

FABRICLIVE 32: TAYO

Fabric/UK/CD

Holy moly, is this ever a fun mix. Tayo takes the '90s breakbeat structure pioneered by folks like Aquasky and Bassbin Twins (both featured here, the former with Ragga Twins), grabs the more step-ping tunes from the dubstep scene (Scream's "Lightning" and Digital Mystikz "Anti War Dub"), throws in dope Jamaicans like Warrior Queen, and isn't afraid to include Mr. Weird himself, Si Begg. Tayo keeps it lively while pushing the envelope, but the icing on the cake is his own tunes, all four of them winners. *Matt Earp*

FUNK & BOOGIE FROM THE GREAT WHITE NORTH FUNK REVIVAL: SOUNDS FROM THE SUBTROPICS

Essential Media Group/US/CD

It's not often that a music mogul gets to produce his own retrospective compilation. But it's also not often that a Czech immigrant to Quebec impacts Philadelphia disco, the way Paul Klein did with his Street-Level label, whose releases have become infamous for their '80s-disco sound as well as their price tags. With *Great White North*, Klein drops 28 of his favorites, including biggies from Little Dabs and Erotic Drum Band. But Klein's obsessions don't stop there: On *Funk Revival*, he collects some of the finest and rarest from Florida's Cubano-funk scene of the '70s. *Justin Hopper*



Optimo

OPTIMO

WALKABOUT

Endless Flight-Mule Musiq/JPN/CD

Few selectors can roam as deeply or as broadly through underground music's teeming treasures with as much acumen as Glasgow-based DJs Jonnie Wilkes and JD Twitch (a.k.a. Optimo). Their *How To Kill the DJ* series raised expectations stratospherically, and *Walkabout* continues their streak. Previous Optimo releases stressed their penchant for forging logical segues from illogical juxtapositions. With *Walkabout*, they focus more cohesively on headfuck minimal techno, with interludes of ill atmospheric pieces (by Boris and Godsy), to stunning effect. Throbbing Gristle's "Walkabout" subverts the disc's grand motif with unsettling undercurrents, a point further driven home by Pan Sonic, Philus, 6k, and others. *Walkabout* triggers paranoia—check the chilling transition from Suicide's "Radiation" into Eventell and Metaboman's "Control A Zoid"—while freeing your ass to move into clubland's Twilight Zone. *Dave Segal*



Jonny Greenwood

JONNY GREENWOOD IS THE CONTROLLER

Trojan/UK/CD
Who knew Jonny Greenwood was dread at the controls? Radiohead’s guitarist/multi-instrumentalist selects 17 cuts from the Jamaican canon for a broad overview of the ’70s island sound. Greenwood winks to his outsider status in the notes, grouping his selections not by the authenticity or obscurity of the material but by musical experimentation from the likes of King Tubby, Scientist, and Lee Perry, and culminating in the violence-torn psychedelics of Johnny Clarke’s “A Ruffer Version.” A who’s-who of vocal stars floats high above most of the mixes, including Derrick Harriot and his heartbreaking lilt on “Let Me Down Easy,” a playful Desmond Dekker on “Beautiful and Dangerous,” and Perry’s classic sci-fi patois on “Bionic Rats.” As Trojan turns 40 this year, the label’s choice of Greenwood as selector shows just how entrenched they—and this music—are in both British culture and the world’s musical consciousness. Jonny does them proud. *Matt Earp*



HI-GRADE GANJA ANTHEMS

Greensleeves/UK/CD
It’s hard to think of a more ubiquitous topic in reggae than ganja. Now Greensleeves collects 18 joints, old and new, as a spliff-rolling soundtrack. The tracklist spans the eras from roots to dancehall, but offers few surprises: Triston Palma complains about people who continually ask him for Rizlas and lighters; John Holt, Eek-a-Mouse, Barrington Levy, and Carlton Livingston evade Babylon; Bounty Killer claims herb “makes you feel constructive and brave”; and Wayne Wonder & Don Yute take a stoned joyride. Nevertheless, it’s a rich harvest of cultural reggae tunes even non-smokers will find irie. *Eric K. Arnold*

MORRIS/AUDIO: CLUB AND HOME ENTERTAINMENT 3

Morris/Audio/SWI/CD
Bern, Switzerland’s Morris/Audio has released 53 singles in the past seven years (87 if you count sister label Citysport). Unfortunately the label’s quantity doesn’t translate into quality. *Club and Home Entertainment 3* features minimal-tech/microhouse production innovators John Dahlbäck, Mossa, Tigerskin, and Tom Ellis, who offer only garage-sale-quality beats. The 12 selections, which are as deflated and monotonous as they are interchangeable, create an inescapable urge to fast-forward to hear if they go anywhere. They don’t. That’s *not* entertainment. *Tomas Palermo*

ON ISOLATION

Room40/AUST/CD
“Isolationist” music stereotypically consists of drones and long silences that make the Earth feel like a lonelier and more desolate place. This compilation sometimes shatters those barriers. Janek Schaefer finds frolicsome bliss in rainbow-lit vibraphone tones, and Scanner brilliantly drenches a gentle piano ballad in rough wilderness noises. The conventional isolationist tracks make angst and claustrophobia oddly relaxing. Richard Chartier achieves a weightless drone that mimics fog passing by skyscrapers and David Toop’s ominous bell tones and sparse Japanese flutes ballet-dance in blackness. Greg Davis’ virtually silent recording of a farm reminds us how startling low volume can be. *Cameron Macdonald*

SOUL SIDES VOLUME TWO: THE COVERS

Zealous/US/CD
Not all the artists here conquer their subject matter as fully as Esther Phillips does with Gil Scott-Heron’s “Home is Where the Hatred Is,” but they all try. O.V. Wright’s take on the chitlin-circuit classic “Let’s Straighten It Out,” for example, finds the underappreciated singer soundtracking his own funeral: It’s desperate, and brilliantly so. Blogger/music critic Oliver Wang solidified his name off the screen with *Volume One*, and his tastes have not faltered. While each of us has a thousand “should’ve been” inclusions, Wang’s selection—including current acts like Antibalas—proves more catholic, and more ambitious, than most. *Justin Hopper*

SUNKISSED

Smalltown Supersound/NOR/CD
Oslo, Norway may be a chilly place, but its music scene is currently one of the hottest spots around. At its burgeoning center sits Smalltown Supersound, crowded with crucial artists like Lindstrøm, Tussle, Bjorn Torske, and Jaga Jazzist. The label’s first mix CD, *Sunkissed*, helmed by G-Ha and Olanski, not only pulls from the Smalltown imprint but also includes regional heavyweights like Serena-Maneesh, Prins Thomas, and Mungolian Jet Set. With silky and imaginative mixes and an intriguing roster of artists, *Sunkissed* is as comprehensive a survey of Norwegian hotness as you will currently find. *Steve Marchese*

WIGHNOMY BROTHERS & ROBAG WRUHME

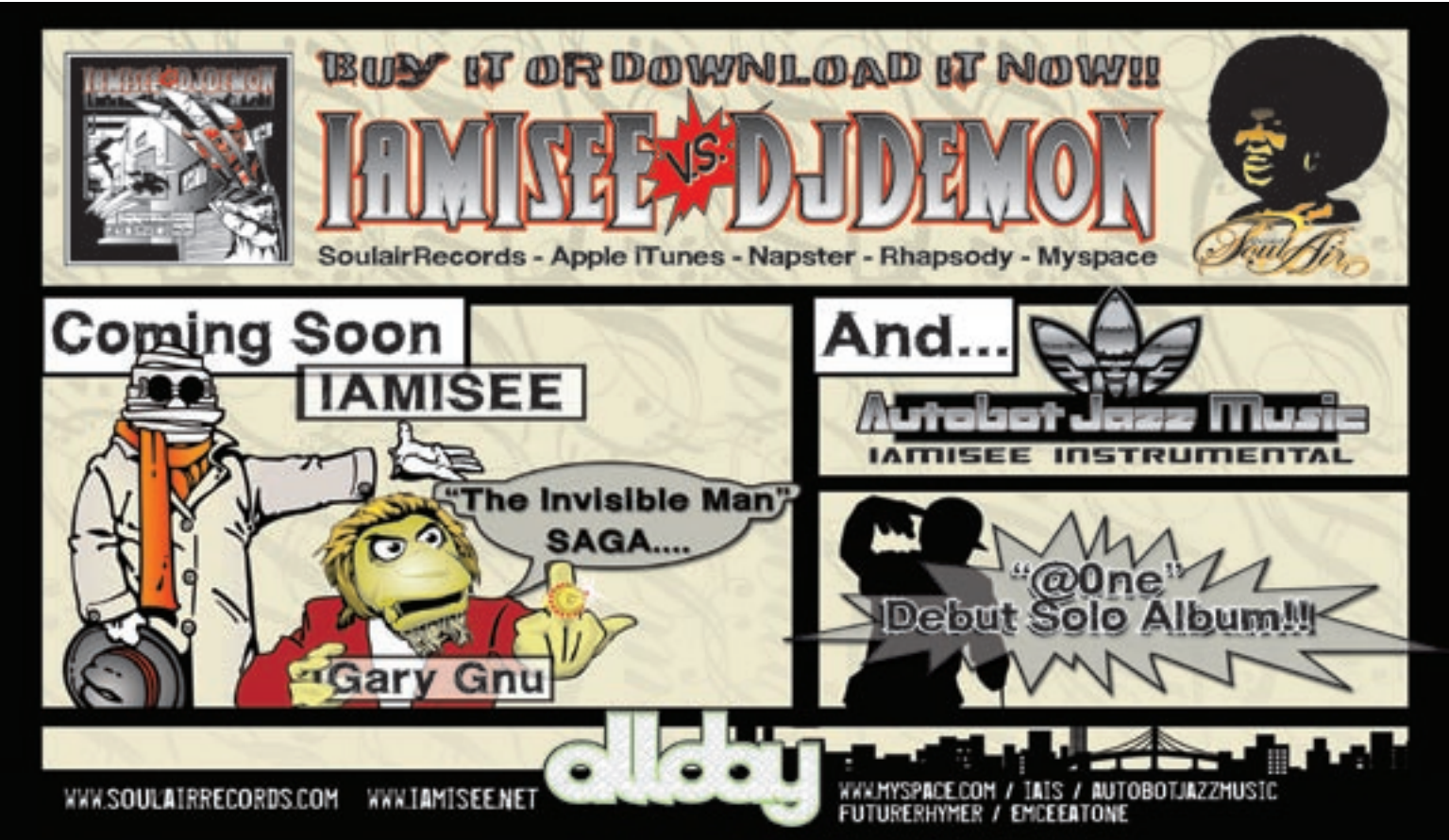
Remikks Potpourri II
Mute/GER/CD
Dynamic and diverse only begin to describe the Wigs’ latest, *Potpourri*, which fires up with a filthy 808-driven rework of FSOL’s “Lifeforms” and quickly turns its mutation device on Röyksopp, Matthias Tanzmann, and Paul Kalkbrenner. Depeche Mode’s “Lilian” is transformed into a slow-rolling bass monster, “Way Out” by Ellen Allien & Apparat has its pristine circuitry transplanted into a new electro battle-chassis, and Nitzer Ebb’s “I Thought” is painted a darker shade of black. Ultimately, Wruhme’s remix of Jean-Paul Bondy’s “Something Is Not Right” wins the trophy for Most Retarded, delivering an unprecedented dose of minimal-tech hypnotica. *Doug Morton*

BODY LANGUAGE VOL. 4: COMPILED AND MIXED BY DJ DIXON

Get Physical/GER/CD
Timo Maas doesn’t usually get fans of obscure dance music too pumped, so it’s surprising when Innervisions purveyor DJ Dixon kicks off his latest mix with Maas’ subdued “Slip In Electro Kid,” that it works to set a dark, deep, and uber-cool tone. Chromatics’ breathy, ’80s-radio-inspired “In the City” doesn’t hurt either, and before you know it, Dixon’s leading listeners down a retro-tinged path that requires neither heavy beats, bass drops, nor synth arpeggios to keep our attention. A creator of moods rather than a keeper of tech-house’s status quo, Dixon does himself proud with *Vol. 4*. *Derek Grey*

XIU XIU: REMIXED & COVERED

5RC/US/2CD
It’s surprising that a project like this took so long, with a back catalog so stunningly diverse and danceable as indie rocker Jamie Stewart’s. Finally, friends like Kid 606 and Gold Chains have taken their turns beating and bleating Xiu Xiu’s angular atmospherics into occasionally dancefloor-worthy, but always intriguing, synth and drum machine workouts. Probably the most interesting of the remix bunch is Stewart’s own signal-jamming take on Joy Division’s “Ceremony,” the perfect track to lead us into the covers disc, which sees Her Space Holiday render the frightening “I Love the Valley, Oh!” into a loungey torch song. Killer. *Ken Taylor*





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Downbeat Diaspora By Rico Washington

GETTING YOU UP ON THE SHARPEST SOUL,
FUNK, AND R&B



Antibalas



Madlib (Photo by B+)



Sly & The Family Stone

For all you boppers out there in the big city—all you street people with an ear for the action—I got some more joints to share with you. Being that we’re tight and everythang, I figured I’d dip into my goodie bag and hip you to a lil’ sumthin’ sumthin’. So don’t say I ain’t never gave you nothin’!

After five years of waitin’ and salivatin’, Atlanta soul slinger **Donnie** is finally following up the critically acclaimed *The Colored Section* with his sophomore jaww, *The Daily News* (SoulThought/EMI). Expect more of that raw, fight-the-power fire, especially on jams like “911.”

Betcha thought your man **Sly Stone** would have scampered back into anonymity after the circus fiasco of last year’s Grammy tribute. Wrong! Word on the street is he hightailed it back to his Batcave to work on a comeback album. To commemorate the occasion, Legacy/Epic is reissuing Sly & The Family Stone’s first seven albums in limited-edition, first-run only digipaks, complete with bonus tracks, alternate takes, and liner notes from today’s top music journalists (I must have missed the memo!). If you’re a die-hard Sly fan, cop ‘em all in the super-limited, numbered box set.

Speaking of blasts from the past, I had to drop a few words about the latest incarnation of funk legends **The Bar Kays**. Stripped down to the duo of vocalist **Larry Dodson** and founding member/bassist extraordinaire **James Alexander**, the fellas are steady givin’ up the fonk on *House Party* (IM/Koch)! Yeah, it’s mostly fodder for the Steve Harvey/Tom Joyner crowd, but don’t sleep on the production from Alexander’s son **Jazze Pha** and the duet with soul siren **Shirley “Woman to Woman” Brown**.

Our mighty Afrobeat crusaders **Antibalas** have done it again! With lauded producer **John McEntire** behind the boards, *Security* (Anti-/Epitaph) is their latest round of live ammo aimed at the fascist pigs and right-wing conservative bastards strangling the life from the oppressed peoples of the earth. Wait...this is a music column, right? Forgive my political diatribe, y’all. At any rate, **Fela** would be hella proud of this one.

In case it wasn’t on your radar, UK crooner **Shaun Escoffery**’s *Move Into Soul* (Oyster) is chock-full of grade-A interpretations of gems from **Stevie Wonder**, **Shuggie Otis**, **Marvin Gaye**, **Bill Withers**, and **Nina Simone**. Need I say more?

Yo, riddle me this: What do you get when you cross an ex-member of jazz-fusion funkateers **The Blackbyrds** with a burgeoning DC-area singer-songwriter in the Howard University classroom of venerable trumpet legend **Donald Byrd**? Probably something like **Malone Barnes** and **Spontaneous Simplicity**’s *Freedom Serenade*. Pressed and distributed in limited quantities in 1976, this badass lil’ joint has been unearthed and dusted off by the good folks over at Ubiquity’s Luv N’ Haight.

Now, I ain’t one to gossip, but word has it that **Madlib** is in the lab twerkin’ knobs for tracks on **Erykah Badu**’s upcoming 2007 album trilogy (ambitious, ain’t it?). Also, keep an eye out for the official sophomore album from Madlib’s jazzy alter-ego **Yesterday’s New Quintet** called *Yesterday’s Universe* (Stones Throw).

Aight, that’s my time, folks. Catch you on the flipside, boppers!



After Silence By Martin De Leon

THE OUTER ORBITS OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC



Deerhunter Photo by Brian Meltz



Lavender Diamond (Photo by Autumn De Wilde)



Noisome

Beats are meant to transcend the dancefloor. Yet, I wonder if electronic music is just supposed to pluck at our heartstrings for a few minutes and disappear. Of course, not all bands want to last forever, yet plenty of DJs do, and below are some prime examples of both.

The breathy jams of Scotland’s **Camera Obscura** are as simple as ‘60s rock ‘n’ roll rhythms mixed with contemporary indie fuzz on their *If Looks Could Kill* EP (Merge). It might be forgettable if not for Tracyanne Campbell’s rich, adorable voice. These kids know what they’re doing.

Spain’s **Noisome** uses laptops to display his mastery of moody, minimal beats on his terrific *Brainset* EP (Kontakte). “Locus Coeruleus” plays like a depressed version of Boom Bip, but don’t let that get you down; he picks it up on “Sensory Ganglia,” which I think might be the title of a bad Tolkien novel.

Forests of guitars flow on *Fluorescent Gray* (Kranky), the new EP by Atlanta’s **Deerhunter**. This electronics-meets-psych band lets its inner-Sonic Youth glow on “Like New” and goes for synthesizer punk on the brilliant “Wash Off,” which displays a noisy maturity for such a young bunch of dudes.

Motenai, on the other hand, isn’t so mature—the French group plays what I call “kidz IDM.” *Mouth Comes out of the Truth of Children* (Motoneige) is filled with sprinkly glitches (“For My Lobster”) and Play-Doh beats that ultimately make me want to run around Paris playing freeze tag.

Playful singer **Lavender Diamond** is really Becky Stark and band, who flesh out deceptively simple songs on *The Cavalry of Light* EP (Matador). Sounding like Vashti Bunyan or Deerhoof singer Satomi Matsuzaki, Stark innocently hits high notes on such gems as “Rise in the Springtime.” This band might make you forget about blurry wars or cold nights.

Brooklyn’s **Leyode** just might make you for-

get the possibility of tomorrow. The duo, which consists of singer Laurel Wells and producer Yusuke Hama, restores my faith in bugged-out beats that are both pretty and smart. *Fascinating Tininess* (Eastern Developments) is filled with slow, downtempo pop (“Hassami”), iced with Wells’ soft vocals and even funky trumpets and Broadcast-esque funk (“Irene”) that give the record depth.

San Francisco’s **Arkansaw Man** made a four-song EP in 1981 and it was only released as a 12”. The self-titled gem is now seeing daylight again on Radium, as the scruffy band busts grainy post-rock (“The Ballroom”) to jerky Gang of Four post-punk (“Health”). Dig for it.

You won’t have to walk too far to find the Irish band **Thread Pulls**—who are like a modern-day Slint. They mangle melodies in favor of slow, brainy rock on *Fluorescent 1* (Ninepoint), which is filled with quiet guitar meditations.

Then, all hell breaks loose. **Grabba Grabba Tape** is a spastic electro duo from Madrid who’s been dressing up like pink Chewbaccas and smashing vocoders since 2004. Their new record, *Kurt Kobaya y G.R.O.X. Man Odia Nirvana* (Naja) is just as bizarre—like a Spanish Lightning Bolt but maybe even louder.

Beats are temporary, but they stain us with loud reasons to nod our heads over and over. So don’t take those headphones off.



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Basic Needs By Kid Kameleon

LOW-END NECESSITIES, FROM RAGGA TO DUBSTEP AND BEYOND



Sometimes I can't figure out whether the music world is expanding or contracting. For every genre that crosses an international boundary, another one goes out of its way to prove that it's fiercely local (just search YouTube for "Memphis Buckin'" for my favorite regionalism of the moment). German dancehall super-group **Seed** certainly falls in the boundary-breaking camp, and they've picked up two massive guest appearances on the first single from their next album, *Next*. "Thing" is classic good times digi-dancehall featuring France's wicked and under-appreciated hip-hop group **Saïan Supa Crew**, while the flip side, "Slow Life," flips the script with soft yet powerful harmonies featuring two introspective verses from London's **Kano** that draw you in like a lover's knowing smile.

The new Portland label Runriot starts up with a superb release: *Puisse* from **Gouseion**. His tunes hit me from out of nowhere, all chunky synths hopped up on super-skitter mode. Like **Funckarma** and **Modeselektor** getting in a fight in a bouncy castle, but with the wistful edge you get from so many American Northwest producers. Also, Gouseion's done a superb mash-up of **Too Short's** "Blow the Whistle". Check mixtapes and more at www.gouseion.com.

Similar sounds, different place for **Cloaks**, who purveys pure analog dubstep with a monkey wrench in the works, in the style of **Wasteland**. The duo from Norwich, England carves a unique path, leaving the warm paranoia of Rastafarianism for the cold claustrophobia of William Gibson and Ryoji Ikeda. Hard, buzzing, brittle, and totally mind-blowing, the *Hi Tek* EP is available from the mighty Werk Discs. "Virus" is my favorite track, and they've got more up their sleeves for the future! Hit www.myspace.com/cloaks for more. Werk also has heavy pressure coming from **Disrupt**, with the "Foundation Bit" 12-inch being the first in a whole slew of releases from Leipzig's finest dubber. Flip back a few pages in this fine issue for a feature on Disrupt/Jahtari.

A bunch of other quick mentions for this month, too. **E.stonji** has been kicking around releases in Germany for five years, and now his top-notch *Con.trst* EP is launching Chicago's Binary Dilemma label, complete with **Nautilus** and **Funckarma** remixes. (Come to think of it, a lot of this month's column is influenced by Funckarma, who are The Netherlands' ultimate crunch-masters.) Also, West Coast pioneer **Bassnectar** keeps it fractured in a more hip-hop style with his *Underground Communication* LP on Om Records. A battery of guest MCs nicely compliment his chunky style.

And, man oh man, **Daniel Haaksman's** Man Recordings slays 'em every time. **DJ Sandrinho's** up on *Baile Funk Masters #1*, chopping the **Quincy Jones** song you know as the Austin Powers theme to death and back again—and that's just the beginning. Blissfully nuts. *Funk Mundial 2* and *3* will be out soon as well!

To end things, please keep the name **Vexkiddy** in your heads. All their tunes are in negotiation for the time being, but they're going to be huge: Victorian waistcoat-wearing, Squarepusher's-acid-pusher-on-acid, end-of-the-year-best-of huge. Watch this space for news. And check out www.vexkiddy.com.



Bass Guest Reviews: Tayo

He probably didn't realize it at the time, but in the mid-'90s Tayo Popoola, while holding it down at London club Friction with folks like Adam Freeland and Rennie Pilgrem, was—according to some—birthing the nu-skool breaks genre, which benefited greatly from his Mob Records label. Since leaving both the club and label behind, he's remained a fixture on the scene, and now holds court on BBC Radio One with his show "In New DJs We Trust," with a clever name and a mission statement to always push boundaries. That's not the only place you'll find Tayo's forward-thinking curation: Check the latest installment of the *FabricLive* series for his exclusive set that features Loot & Pillage, Blaqstarr, and tons more, and peep his newest favorite cuts right here, right now. *Derek Grey*
www.myspace.com/djtayo3000

BASSBIN TWINS "WOPPA" Spidercuts/US/12
Head and shoulders above any record in this scribe's current set. Who knew that a simple beat, a one-note droning bassline, and some ill chops of an old-school breakbeat could sound so dull on paper and so incendiary on the dancefloor? This tune can get you a new girlfriend or help you run for president. No lie. *Tayo*

SI BEGG FEATURING EPCOT "HARD LIKE FUNK" Noodles/UK/12
Whether it's glitch-hop, electro breaks, or abstract electronica, you know electronic renaissance man Si Beggs/Buckfunk 3000/whoever he decides to be that day is gonna deliver. This joint takes rapper Epcot and pastes him over an uptempo break-house beat with enough off-key, twisted turnarounds to keep it from being a run-of-the-mill roller. Killer. *Tayo*

RENNIE PILGREM "ERASER" TCR/UK/12
As a founding father of the breaks movement, Rennie Pilgrem's challenge is to stay relevant in today's ever-evolving market, and this is a return to storming form from this underground music mainstay. And no mistake: a nod to the oh-so-now sound of electro, married to a tough groove that actually has the temerity to use a real breakbeat. Imagine! *Tayo*

SINDEN "BEEPER" Counterfeet/UK/12
You might not have heard of him yet, but you will soon. He runs with Switch, Herve, Jesse Rose, and those Dubside's cats, and as a club and radio DJ he delves into dancehall, *baile* funk, and all manner of weirdness, like a British Diplo. As a producer, he brings twisted ghetto house, a hip-hop attitude, and a swing to make the laziest hips sway and the shyest shoulders get their shuffle on. Watch him grow. *Tayo*

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Broken Business
By Peter Nicholson
FUTURE JAZZ AND BUSTED BEATS



Just like the bulbs in my backyard (and the weeds in the sidewalk) new tunes are sprouting as the seasons shift. Yet, though spring may have sprung and most are over their WMC hangovers, I’m still digging the *Winter Chill* digital-only EP from Quango. There’s a few paradoxically red-hot uptempo mixes from Trentmøller and Henrik Schwarz, but I’m all about **Seiji**’s remix of **Gecko Turner**’s “Afrobeatnik,” with its chicken-scratch guitars and raw horns. **Zeb** also has a nice flamenco-vs.-dub-feeling cut on there, “Preto,” which is taken from his debut album.

Also feeling two other digital-only joints, both on the mellow tip. First is the *Sessions des Rosiers* EP on Six Degrees from **MNO**, one of Parisian vibes man Michael Emaneau’s many projects. Love the revolutionary samples and subtle dub styles of “Che,” plus the languid break-beats and subdued-but-funky keyboard work. Another choice selection you’ll only find on iTunes and other download retailers is the *Pleasure from Precision* release on Balanced Records from **Solidaze**. It’s another one for the beginning (or end) of the evening; my pick is the moody and mysterious Kasm remix of “Nighttime in El Canton.”

All right, enough with the bits and bytes. How about some vinyl for all you Luddites? With a suitably rootsy, raw vibe check out **TM Juke** feat. **Alice Russell**’s “So Good” on the back of the “Skin” (Tru Thoughts) 12”—pure funk at its finest with an extra-sweet breakdown. TM Juke’s album is out in the States on good ol’ Ubiquity Records, who have a hot one on their hands with the *Choices EP Vol. 1*. If you braved the swarms of sunburnt Brits at WMC, you might have stumbled across a copy: Go find it and head straight to **The Hipsta Wonkaz** “Jupiter Jam.” I loved the chopped and broken jazzy breaks of their “We Love” on Flyin’ High, and this is just as dope.

Clear over on the other side of the Pacific, **DJ Mitsu the Beats** has turned in one of his more laid-back remixes for Austria’s Sunshine Enterprises, specifically **Frankie Valentine** feat. **Monica Vasconcelos**’ “Marinheiro So”—it’s all crunchy drums, languid hip-hop vibes, and Vasconcelos’ stunningly sweet singing, and it’s all good. Don’t miss the a-side either, which has a top re-rub of “Zumbi,” from New York’s **Afropsychopathz**, and a more cosmic, broken flavor.

Big Bang’s got it going on with their “Dancin’ Nights” (Arision) 12” featuring remixes from Italo-samba meister (how’s that for culture clash?) **Nicola Conte** and **Daz-I-Kue**. Daz’s mix has a huge, antsy beat and lots of rolling keys, while Conte, as always, serves up the swing.

How about a quick shot of white label action? Somebody find a home for **O. Boogie** (and U-Gené, who provides the falsetto mic magic). “One More Day” drops a nice, clappy broken beat over a rubbery bassline; this one is tight future soul done right.

Gonna close things out with a little, “awwww, how sweet!” **Domu** recently tied the knot and he’s celebrating with a special (you knew it was coming) digital-only release, cleverly titled *The Wedding* EP. “Something Borrowed” is a slinky, sample-based joint, but my pick of the lot is the strutting “Something New” with its great sing-along chorus.



Apocalypse Wow
By Roy Dank
TRAVERSING TIME AND SPACE IN SEARCH OF
ODDBALL DANCE GOODIES



It’s times like these that make me stoked as shit and outright giddy to be writing about new music. The past month or so has been especially exciting, with a spate of new labels cropping up and the welcome return of a number of folks who have been quietly toiling away in the studio over the past few months.

First up to bat is **Citizen Kane**’s Disques Sinthomme label, whose monster debut boasts top-notch edits courtesy of man-about-studio **Darshan Jesrani**. Both the Afro-inflected “Run” and the slow bounce of Jesrani’s “Tighten Up” will satisfy even the most discerning heads. Kane also contributes his talents to **Roughstars**’ latest with his take on “The Virus,” backed by none other than *XLR8R*’s own **Nick Chacona**’s Tubb Dubb remix of “Passerby.”

New Jersey’s Troubleman Unlimited label recently spawned Italians Do It Better, a more dancefloor-focused imprint trafficking solely in 12” releases from a gaggle of bands. Yes, bands. Troubleman alums **Glass Candy** get things cooking with a cover of **Belle Epoque**’s “Miss Broadway,” while new vocal talent **Farah** dabbles in similar no-wave stylings. You can also expect forthcoming releases from the likes of **Invisible Conga People** and **Professor Genius**.

The seemingly flawless Mule stable from Japan expands their ranks with Endless Flight, a new label designed for mix CD projects and their associated vinyl samplers. Scottish eclecticians **Optimo** kicked things off earlier this year with the decidedly leftfield *Walkabout* mix, while *Let’s Get Lost* by TNT (a.k.a. **Tim Sweeney** and **Tim Goldsworthy**) drops any day now. Mule Musiq continues its steady stream of tasty treats. Following the most excellent **Padded Cell** rub of **Sly Mongoose**’s “Bad Pulse” and **Das Etwas**’

gem “Change,” **Force of Nature** drops “To the Brain.” This Tokyo twosome is turning everything into magic these days, and if that wasn’t convincing enough, the mighty **Prins Thomas** gets roped in for one of his signature Diskomikses.

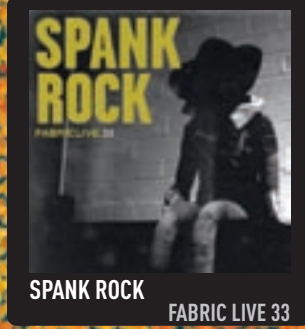
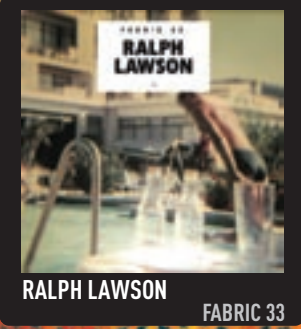
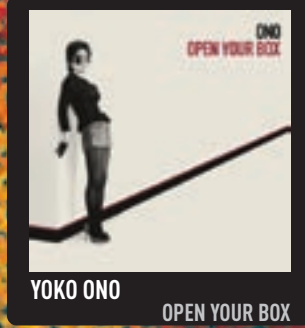
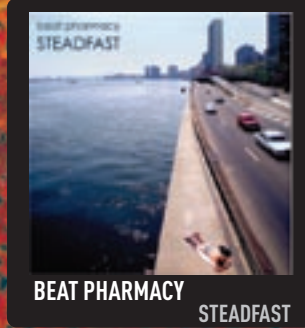
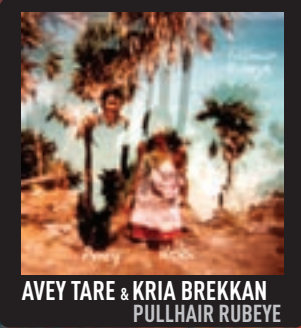
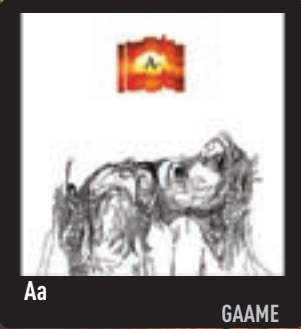
Only just a year old and the Permanent Vacation camp has already established itself as a label to be reckoned with. Does this really surprise you, what with new 12s from the likes of the Canary Islands’ own disco champ **Ilya Santana**, Toronto’s **Steve Yanko**, and the **Maurice Fulton**-produced **Kathy Diamond** album? I didn’t think so.

Fulton pals and all-around awesome doods **!!!** released their most excellent new opus, *Myth Takes*, back in March, and now we’ve got some lovely single action to further whet our collective palate. Apocalypse Wow fave **Emperor Machine** and dance-pop powerhouse **Hot Chip** take on the eight-piece’s “Must Be the Moon,” but it may well be the original that takes the cake for me. Love them dubby FX!

Speaking of punk-funk vibes, **James Chance** jumps back into the fray via ROIR’s *Soul Exorcism Redux*, a re-release of his live album with The Contortions from ’81. The icing on the cake is the addition of three previously unreleased cuts from ’87 to the CD release. Rumor has it Chance will return to the stage in support of this one.

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LAUGHING ON THE INSIDE

STARS OF THE LID	and their refinement of the decline	2CD/3LP	krank100	OUT NOW
“...two hours of weightlessness; your own portable anti-gravity time-displacement device.” First new album in five years, an instant classic. <i>Dream Magazine</i>				
DEERHUNTER	cryptograms	CD/2LP	krank104	OUT NOW
“ Cryptograms is the kind of record that should be played in every teenage bedroom in America.” Vinyl 2LP release pairs the Cryptograms full length with the new EP. <i>Dusted Magazine</i>				
VALET	blood is clean	CD	krank105	OUT NOW
Debut album from Portland’s Honey Owens who has worked in too many outfits to note. Alien psychedelic blues jams from the outer edge of the galaxy. Ghostly and magical.				
LICHENS	omns	CD+DVD	krank106	OUT NOW
“Lichens launches skyward eerie, hymnal moans; atomized guitar chords; and meditative, Fahey-esque fingerpicking... and the special knowledge to which only the most spiritual cats are privy.” 2 disc package includes a DVD of live performances. <i>Dave Segal-The Stranger</i>				
DEERHUNTER	fluorescent grey	CDEP	krank107	OUT NOW
A new EP released right after the album, and it might be even better? Almost too good to be true. Almost. Four all new songs and a video for Strange Lights from the Cryptograms album.				
STRATEGY	future rock	CD	krank108	05.21.07
Third album is a thesis statement for Paul Dickow’s vision of a genre-free musical world. “Humid deep-dub-house-punk-disco jams.” <i>Boomkat</i>				
ANDREW PEKLER	cue	CD	krank109	05.21.07
Following releases on Scape and Staubgold, Pekler takes a new path. Postkrautrock minimalism recalling in spirit Cluster’s masterpiece <i>Zuckerzeit</i> .				

kranky.net 

|| REVIEWS || COLUMNS



En Tu Casa By Nick Chacona HOUSEKEEPING, FROM TECH AND MINIMAL TO DEEP AND TRADITIONAL



In another show of reverence to the sound of house past, Strictly Rhythm has been resurrected from the grave. For those who aren’t familiar with dance music history, Strictly is considered one the most influential labels ever by producers and DJs from the across the dance spectrum. With releases from a venerable who’s-who of house producers—including Masters at Work, Eric Morillo, Armand van Helden, Josh Wink, Todd Terry, and DJ Pierre—Strictly’s catalog is unrivalled in its sheer volume of hits. After a long hiatus, label boss Mark Finkelstein penned a deal with U.K. label Defected to begin re-releasing some of the Strictly’s biggest tunes, including Aly-Us’ “Follow Me,” **River Ocean’s** “Love & Happiness, and **Photon Inc’s** “Generate Power.” This rebirth is already underway: the first 10 releases hit stores back in February with the rest to be spread out over the year. If you’re one of those dudes who already has the original vinyl, yet is too lazy to convert it, the entire re-release catalog is available for download at www.beatport.com.

Ultra-loyal fans of the Motor City house sound are in for a real treat, too, as some seriously sought-after releases drop this spring. It will come as no surprise that the most highly anticipated of the lot is the new **Moodyman** single, the promo vinyl of which is already fetching more than \$30 online. KDJ35, “Limited,” is an extremely limited single-sided slice of jazz-house perfection. Imagine a live CTI Records session-quality recording that captures the simplistic, hypnotic vibe that makes KDJ’s sound so magical.

Also due is the latest full-length from **Theo Parrish**, the *Sound Sculptures* LP. Included are nine tracks from Theo that range from deep and jazzy, such as his collaboration with **Warren Harris** (a.k.a. **Hanna**) and **Monica Blaire** on “Second Chances,” to the far reaches of abstract techno on “Synthetic Flemm,” to the slo-mo disco grooves prepared à la Sound Signature on “The Rink.”

This spring will also see the femme-centric Women on Wax label/collective drop **Viermalair’s** “My Philosophy,” with mixes by **Piranahead** and veteran **Rick Wade**. And last but not least, newcomer Sistrum Records presents its second outing from **Patrice Scott**, a four-track EP of retro and minimalist fare entitled *Beyond Deep*.

Back in New York, **Marko Militano** makes a big funk-house splash with his “Turning Leaves” single for Dirty Trick. This is the kind of dub-funk chunkiness that fans of Derrick Carter and Joshua kill for. Following with the epic string house sound, **Filsonik** graces the Funk La Planet imprint with the *Evolution* EP, a cosmic mélange of Afro rhythms and silky synths that had customers at NYC’s Dancetracks lining up for some early promos. On a similar tip, Sweden’s **Mikael Nordgren** (a.k.a. **Tiger Stripes**) will see his first release on a European label in some time in the form of “Kayoko” on Prog City. Though the original is a bit darker and more rigid than many of Mikael’s releases, **Kiko Navarro’s** mix is what keeps the Afro-tech groove going.

To finish things off, my pick of the month goes to the untouchable combo of **Kathy Diamond** and **Maurice Fulton**, who come forth with another stellar release on Munich’s Permanent Vacation. Don’t mind that Roy’s probably talking it up in Apocalypse Wow right now, too; this mid-tempo house groove, built around a classic piano riff and Diamond’s sultry vocals, is just as fitting for this here column. No doubt this will be the closing tune at many a serious late-night dance party full of grinning faces for months to come.



House Guest Reviews: Jerome Derradji

As the proprietor of house label Still Music, Chicago-based DJ Jerome Derradji aims to release soulful music, regardless of a song’s sub-class. “It can be a dirty house track from Detroit or a jazzy tune from France,” he once said in an interview. “As long as it has soul.” Trust then, that there’s plenty of depth to his arsenal, which also includes the reissue label Past Due, responsible for re-releasing hard-to-find disco, house, and funk obscurities with remixes from the likes of Prins Thomas and Henrik Schwarz. And for even more soulful helpings of house, check his newest compilation, *Slip N Slide Presents: The Sound Of Still Music*; then catch him at his APT residency, doling out the coming months’ most deliciously deep releases below. *Derek Grey* www.itstillmusic.com

TOKYO BLACK STAR “REINCARNATION” white/ITA/12

Alex From Tokyo and his partner Isao Kumano are back with another bomb, bound to be the first release on a brand new imprint founded by Enrico from Neroli and Italian fashionistas Slam Jam. “Reincarnation” is a deep, maddening, dubby house tune that brings us back to Chez Damier & Ron Trent’s Prescription Records. This track has such a hypnotic bassline and gimmicky synth stab. It’s reminiscent of the Detroit vs. Chicago sound and guarantees the dancefloor will be brought to exhaustion. *Jerome Derradji*

TRICKSKI “POWERHORSE” Member of the Trick/GER/12

Yannick Labbe’s and Daniel Becker’s productions always amaze me; they’re so versatile yet so coherent. “Drakkar” is a slow monster that starts on a bouncy boogie beat. The tune evolves into a mind-blowing synthetic form that reminds me of Kraftwerk until it reaches the breakdown and takes a left turn that will either empty the dancefloor or make everybody jump for another three minutes of goodness. “Powerhorse” is a superb beatdown joint with a magnificent piano breakdown and the most amazing synth. *Jerome Derradji*

FURRY PHREAKS WITH TERRA DEVA

“ALL OVER THE WORLD” (JAZZANOVA REMIX/ATJAZZ DUB) Miso/UK/12

This time, the Furry Phreaks’ world-famous “All Over the World” gets remixed by heavyweights Jazzanova and Atjazz. Jazzanova kills it with a stunning 4/4 mix: Shuffly, loud, and percussive with a ton of synth- and electro-tinted arrangements, this one ravishes any dancefloor. I prefer the Atjazz Dub. What deep is all about, with killer basslines, Detroit-esque keys, and drums; Martin Iveson’s the man on this one. An absolutely essential piece of wax that will be released as a limited 12” on Miso now, and on Defected (with new mixes) later. *Jerome Derradji*

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|| REVIEWS || COLUMNS



Read the Label By Jesse "Drosco" Serwer

HIP-HOP MIXTAPES, WHITE LABELS, AND SHIT



Lone Catalyst



Gillie Da Kid

In light of the recent RIAA raids on DJ Drama and the Aphiliates Music Group, mixtape DJs have been forced to rethink their craft from top to bottom in order to keep it moving forward. Since mixtapes involving established artists are generally promotional tools—rather than cash generators in and of themselves—one seemingly productive option has been to offer them online as free downloads. While Cleveland's **Mick Boogie** (www.mickboogie.com) is certainly not the first DJ to use this approach, he appears to be taking the lead, and his first such release, the **Little Brother** feature *And Justus For All*, is excellent. **Phonte** and **Big Pooh** sound more focused than ever, spitting over mostly original beats from **9th Wonder**, **Khrysis**, **Nottz**, and even **RJD2**, and throwing in some interesting interludes about the mixtape crackdown and other industry issues for good measure. Boogie recently launched The Premix, an internet-mixtape series pre-viewing upcoming albums from A-list artists with a volume on flavor-of-the-month **Rich Boy**.

Babygrande Records has carved a niche for itself, crafting legal street albums out of highlights from existing mixtapes by acts like **Custom Made** and **Purple City**. On *The Best of the GDK Mixtapes*, the latest installment in that series, Philly's **Gillie Da Kid** shows that his claims of being a ghostwriter for Lil Wayne and Cash Money just might be true. While he doesn't have Weezy's flare for hooks (or his curious word choices), Gillie demonstrates a diverse array of rhyme styles, from straight-up grimy ("Ghetto That I Live In") to a Southern-style double-time flow ("Figga What, Figga Who"). Also turning up on several tracks is **AB-Liva** of the **Re-Up Gang**; before he was a **Clipse** sideman, Liva was a member of Gillie's **Major Figgas** crew. Meanwhile, I'd like to hear more from Liva's Re-Up Gang cohort (and fellow Philly MC) **SandMan**. "Where I'm From," a solo track featured on **DNA**'s recent *Clipse* mixtape, *U Know What I Sell* (and SandMan's MySpace page: www.myspace.com/sandmanakasandcannon) shows that the *We Got It 4 Cheap* standout is definitely compelling without Malice and Pusha by his side. Over an eerie beat from an unknown producer, SandMan delivers a trio of lyrical verses with the gravity of a Scarface or Beanie Sigel.

Across the Keystone state in Pittsburgh, **Lone Catalysts** (**J. Rawls** and **J. Sands**) have regrouped to drop "Make It Better" b/w "The Numbers" (B.U.K.A./Up Above), a stellar preview of their upcoming *Square Binizz* LP. For a more insightful look into the Lone Catalysts world, check J. Sands' *The Breaks Vol. 2: The Interlude Violator* (B.U.K.A.). An entire LP's worth of album interludes, it's less tedious than that sounds, and often hilarious.

I've avoided including Baltimore club music and other hip-hop offshoots (like grime, for instance) in this column in the past, but I've decided to make an exception in the case of **DJ Blaq Starr**'s excellent *Supa Starr* EP, on Diplo's Mad Decent label. Blaq Starr is no typical club beatmaker, as his production credits for B-more rapper **Young Leek** ("Jiggle It") and **M.I.A.** can attest. Tracks like "Shake It to the Ground" (featuring a slick-talking young female named **Ray Ray**) and "Check Me Out Like" transcend the genre, taking in elements from electro to deep house. Perhaps it's not hip-hop, but any fan of music should be able to appreciate this material.



Bubble Metropolis By M1 Tronik

TECHNO: MINIMAL, BANGING, AND BEYOND



Alex Smoke



Water Lilly

Start the panic... Mere hours before I was to get started on writing this month's column, the hard drive on my computer died a rather fitful but swift death. It came with no warning, but after using it to listen to the frenetic new *Destroy* EP by **Proxy** (Turbo), I should have known something was up. This neo-rave dance track came straight outta Russia, and samples a classic rave anthem keyboard stab as its main component.

Perhaps had I been listening to the modern classical stylings of **Steve Reich**, I wouldn't have had that problem. It's what **Alex Smoke** has been doing, and his first of two upcoming releases is a remix of Reich's "Proverb" on Giant Step. This 10-minute escapade breaks apart the original from 1995 and gives it a somewhat minimal, yet still ultimately human, feel. Up next is Smoke's new two-track release, "Prima Materia" (Soma). In an odd way, the original version is stylistically similar to the Reich remix, but for dancefloor sensations pick "Always & Forever."

For deep, sensational, electro-techno pain, be on the hunt for **Water Lilly**'s *Invisible Ink* (Mental Groove). It's a little reminiscent of '90s techno act **Air Liquide** with its whispering female vocal, but it still works for me, particularly the **Arnaud Rebotini/Black Strobe** remix.

This month's "backdoor trance" award goes to **Clemens Neufeld**, whose new single, "Polaris" b/w "Solaris" (Giant Wheel), is as hypnotic as it is danceable. Coming in at a close second is **Ripperton**'s "A Skilift Upstairs the Sleeping City" (Systematic) which, along with its bizarre title, freezes sonic slopes and icy chords together for an emotional ride to the trance-y side!

In from the cold are **Mikdat** vs. **Afrilounge** on their *We Are Here* EP (Kassete). This three-track effort reminds me of some of Anthony Rother's recent work; it's stark, deep, and

pulsating. Check "Maria" and "Druckpegel" for maximum minimal groove excitement.

For a bit of sci-fi scintillation, track down **Jori Hulkkonen**'s newest single, "The Fenno Baron" b/w "Katajanukke" (Turbo). Hulkkonen has always been on his own vibe, and it's no different here. This is slightly odd yet danceable techno that includes an acidic mover called "Dome Bizarre," which really brings the animals out onto the dancefloor.

Imagine what it would be like to be in the studio as Ric Ocasek from The Cars and Carl Craig collaborated. Well, it's actually happened, kind of. Craig has remixed **Brazilian Girls**' "Last Call" (Verve), which was originally produced by Ocasek, into a 20-minute low-down and dirty synth jam. I want someone out there to find me one remix this guy has done over the past five years that has been wack, or even mediocre. You just can't do it.

Ending this month's column is the *City2City* EP on Morris Audio. This label is constantly surprising me; this time, they shock the house with a four-banger aimed squarely at your grill. My favorites are "Skull" by **Sian** and "Spanish Fly" by **Ekkohaus**. This one could stay in your bag for a quite some time, so don't scratch it.



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Lucky 13
By Toph One

TophOne can be heard every Wednesday at the RedWine Social at Dalva in S.F., and check out aidslifecycle.org/5704.



Aja West



Bebel Gilberto Photo by Philippe Klot



Plotz!

One week it's \$600 gigs, a full plate of writing assignments, and brilliance emanating from your pores; the next, it's nothing but flat tires, broken gear, and eating that funky old Rice-A-Roni from the back of the cupboard. Some might need a session with Dr. Wayne Dyer, or a trip to Santa Cruz and a high colonic to get back on track. Me, I just want a good long MUNI bus ride and a little of Hemingway's *A Movable Feast*, maybe an afternoon spent watching the lemurs frolic around at the San Francisco Zoo followed by some pensive drinking next to the fireplace at the Riptide on Taraval Ave. "Don't let the bastards grind you down," a wise old punk rocker used to tell me in high school. "Our numbers are few, but we're winning!"

1. POLYRHYTHM ADDICTS BREAK GLASS

BabyGrande/US/CD
How in the fuck is some millionaire doing Budweiser commercials during the Super Bowl gonna tell us that hip-hop is dead, when there are Palestinian MCs rapping about the West Bank, and thousands of beatmakers rocking laptops on the way to high school, and a group like Polyrhythm Addicts (DJ Spinna, Shabaam Sahdeeq, Mr. Complex, and Tiye Phoenix) dropping albums like this?! Pray for vinyl, because "Reachin'," featuring Pharohe Monche, is the first bona fide banger of the summer.

2. ROMANOWSKI PARTY IN MY PANTS: REMIXED

Trouser Trout/US/2CD
Our favorite Swiss nudist is back with a gang of remixes, chock full of dirty funk beats and Latin jazz riddims. Check out reinterpretations by Sureshot from the Sharpshooters, Tom Thump & Uplift, Mexico City's Pop En La Moda, and Faust & Shortee's crushing mix of "Days & Days."

3. MARKUS ENOCHSON

"ENDLESS DANCE" B/W "TONIGHT THE NIGHT"

Sonar Kollektiv/GER/12
The peppy, padded remix by Karizma has its time and place, but you wanna know what sex on the dancefloor sounds like? Check the original, homie.

4. MICHOCAN "2 BULLETS: THE REMIXES"

Grayhound/US/12
There better be some boat parties coming up soon, cause The Glimmers' Hacienda Dub needs to be aired out under the night sky, fully loaded, with a head full of stars. And by all accounts, Harvey's mix is wild, wooly, and wonderful—much like the man himself.

5. SLEAZY MCQUEEN I'M WORKING ALL NIGHT EP

Eight-Tracks/US/12EP
Nice, warm funk from Anthony (Garlic) Mansfield's mix, and a jacking rework by Jaywood that turns into a wobbly monster of a gut-bub-ler. Yeah!

6. BEBEL GILBERTO

BRING BACK THE LOVE (REMIXES EP 2)

Six Degrees/US/12EP
Shrift's discofied mix is a jam, but I've been lost in the murky depths of the Prins Thomas Dub for quite some time. Sell the cat—I may never come home!

7. GECKO TURNER "AFROBEATNIK"

Quango/US/download
You know if I'm reviewing an MP3, it's gotta be pretty damn hot. The original is damn near perfection, but then Seiji gets his hands on it and, oh my... Write your congressman! Picket the courthouse! Letter to the Editor: "This needs to be on vinyl!"

8. V/A PURE TONE AUDIOTONOMY 3

Eardrums4Eyelids/US/12EP
A bunch of lost gems from the Pacific Northwest—peep the soaring tracks from Nomadic Noise and G-Wiz, or the proto-hyphy grime (griphy?) of Brokaw's "Radio." Deeep hip-hop shit.

9. RICHIE PHO "HEARTICAL BEHAVIOR"

Redbud/US/7
I just wanna DJ a punk show soon so I can throw this little ragga ditty on in between bands and watch the skinhead girls shake they butts! Viva Don Letts!

10. PLOTZ! EXTRAORDINARY RENDITIONS

self/US/CD
An unfortunate name—and an unlikely combination of Balkan, gypsy, and hard rock guitar—but when they pull it off, as on "Crabman" and "Makedonsko Oro," these cats shine! I'd say more traddy on the traditional side and harder on the rock side. Might as well go all the way, no? Props to Orest Balaban, whose bass drives the train much of the time. *Živjeli!*

11. AJA WEST THE OLYMPIAN

Mackrosoft/US/CD
Slinky, blue-eyed soul from the funky Northwest. This cat's on my guestlist anytime.

12. V/A QUEENDOM

Outta Nowhere/US/CD
Finally! Salute the women in hip-hop! Bangers from vets like MC Lyte and the Conscious Daughters, but unexpected heat from new jills Madame Pinky, Siren's Echo, and many more. Mad respect!

LUCKY 13 THIRD RAIL

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Just Jay and RasQue from the Urban Umpires host a *dope* weekly hip-hop show on Breakthrradio.com with guest hosts like Rasco, Freddie Fox, King Solomon, Equipto, and many more. Check those archives, too!



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IN THE STUDIO: ALIAS

Anticon's dream-hop maestro steps away from the sampler.
WORDS: BRANDON IVERS PHOTO: MORGAN HOWLAND

Ever since crate-digging purists became indie rap's greatest limitation, artists like Anticon's Alias have gone far out of their way to shake up expectations. Shying away from both mainstream rap's fascination with synth gloss *and* hip-hop traditionalism, Alias' lo-fi experimentation recalls records that never existed, resulting in a dusty combination of garage production and gritty electronics.

Alias' sound transformation didn't happen overnight. A string of releases (beginning with 2003's *Muted*) show the evolution in progress, with each release up to last year's *Brookland/Oaklyn*, and his latest collection of remixes, increasing in musical ambition and instrumental range. And contrary to conventional wisdom, the results haven't sucked. Perhaps Alias proves you *can* teach an old sampler dude new tricks?

Alias' *Collected Remixes* (Anticon) is out now. www.myspace.com/alias

WHY DID YOU SHIFT TOWARDS USING SYNTHESIZERS?

When I first started making beats, it was all with a sampler and records—that was it. It was kind of this unspoken rule that everything had to be sampled off rare records, and it started getting really restrictive. I had done music like that for a while, and I just wanted to figure out my own sound... figure out what notes go together. So I bought a guitar and a Korg MS-2000, and just started toying around with them, figuring out chords.

WAS THERE ANYONE THAT INFLUENCED YOU TOWARDS PARTICULAR GEAR?

Dax Pierson [from Subtle] was probably the most influential person for me. [He] had all these vintage synthesizers, and he'd let me sit around and play with them. And then I went on a tour with Themselves, and Dax was on that tour, too. Listening and watching what he was doing, playing basslines, and just doing different effects and stuff made me want to start messing around with synthesizers and tweaking my own sounds.

DO YOU SEE ANY PARALLELS BETWEEN CRATE-DIGGING AND FINDING OLD SYNTHESIZERS?

Definitely. There was this one time I found a Casio CZ-101 at this swap meet, and I got it for like 30 bucks. It was kinda cool; I was all excited about it, and this guy stops me and was like, "Is that a CZ-101? Man, I'll give you \$50 for it right now!" No [laughs]. But yeah, it's got that same "on the hunt" feel... finding that little gem in a big pile of stuff.

WHEN YOU'RE WORKING WITH NEW GEAR, HOW DO YOU GET THINGS TO SOUND DIRTY?

Mainly through using compression and adding a lot of reverb. But one of the main things I use, as far as effecting, is the [Boss] SP-303. I don't really use the sampling part of it—I use it as an effects processor. It has this "vinyl simulation" effect, which has three different knobs: one is for compression; the other two are for a warbling sound and little clicks and pops. But if you turn down those other knobs and just use the compression, it really gives this fat, warm sound. It's really cool to run synths into that while you're recording... It really flattens everything out and takes away that clean tinniness. I also run drums into the SP-303 sometimes to give them that 12-bit SP-1200 sound.

BUT YOU'RE STILL USING AN MPC, RIGHT?

I definitely use the MPC [2000]... I use it to chop up and sequence before I record into Pro Tools. And from Pro Tools, I do the arranging and further editing. But basically, I have my turntables running into my SP-303, and the SP-303 running into my MPC. It's kind of in the path of the turntable, so if I'm sampling drums and I want them to be fat and dirty, I can use that [SP-303] compression effect before I even sample them.

SO DO YOU JUST GO PIECE-BY-PIECE, RECORDING EACH PART INTO PRO TOOLS AND ARRANGING IT FROM THERE?

Yeah. I used to start with the drums, but lately I've been doing the drums last. Because the drums are such a focal point in my music, I always want them to be really prevalent in the mix. So I've been kind of building basslines and melodies around a click track, and once I get a feel for how it's going to sound, I'll move on to the drums. That's where I end up spending the most time.

YOU ALWAYS HEAR PEOPLE CLAIMING THEY CAN'T MAKE ANYTHING BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE CERTAIN PIECES OF GEAR. HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE THAT?

I didn't even own my own MPC until 2001! I was always borrowing other people's MPCs or bringing records over to people's houses. I was never like, "My shit sucks because I don't have my own equipment..." I really think you just have to make do with whatever you can get your hands on.



In Alias' studio (counter-clockwise from top), Casio CZ-101, Korg MS-2000, Akai MPC 2000XL, Boss SP-303



Photo © Merve Hiyak

ARTIST TIPS: CINEMATIC ORCHESTRA

Despite the proliferation of bedroom rockers with cracked laptop copies of Logic, there are plenty of producers recording the old-fashioned way—in studios. While there's nothing particularly old-fashioned about soundtrack-jazz-loving Jason Swinscoe, his latest filmic opus as The Cinematic Orchestra, *Ma Fleur* (Domino)—which features guests as disparate as “Rescue Me” singer Fontella Bass and Lamb’s Louise Rhodes—was made in more than a few studios around the world. We quizzed him on the most important things to remember when recording in multiple spaces. Above all, he says the most crucial factor is maintaining the right vibe. “A nice space, good acoustics, good studio engineer, and cool people,” are essential, he explains. Here’s what else he recommends. *Derek Grey*

www.cinematicorchestra.com

SAMPLE RATES/CALIBRATION:

I was recording various instruments at a studio in London. I brought all my gear for mapping out the session. The system at that studio wasn’t calibrated; rather, I hadn’t worked out what this actually

meant. When I returned back to my studio excited to check out all the new recordings, they were at the wrong pitch and the wrong speed. I had the pleasure and fun of transferring all the files—many from 48Hz to the old-skoool 44.1Hz.

DIGITAL FILE FORMATS:

It isn’t as necessary to be so critical with which file type you bring or take from the studio. WAV, AIFF, or even SDII are all still prevalent across both platforms. WAV does, however, seem to be the standard.

SPACE:

When I move from studio to studio, it has become essential for me to record as clean and purely as possible. No reverb, unless it is just in the cans for the musicians or the vocalists. Otherwise, coloration, reflection, and rogue frequencies appear in the sounds and can give you some problems later on. It is always important to choose a good space for the specifics of the instrumentation you are recording.

MICROPHONES:

My engineer brings much of his own gear, especially microphones. This helps in keeping the sound consistent. Specific microphones have shown to be great at capturing specific qualities in my various acoustic instruments. When you bring your own mics and refine your techniques, then you’ll have a fighting chance at capturing whatever you are hearing. The other part of this process is working out what good mic pre-amps the studio has invested in.

HARD DISK:

Always bring your own. Make sure you take the session and the files away with you. It can be important as a reminder of what was actually happening. You will need to have a version of the software that the session was recorded onto (in pro studios, usually Pro Tools). If you don’t, then make notes on where a good take was, a specific riff you heard, or start points that need matching. If you just take the files away from the session, then make sure all are bounced down starting at bar one. This way you won’t drive yourself crazy trying to match up takes.

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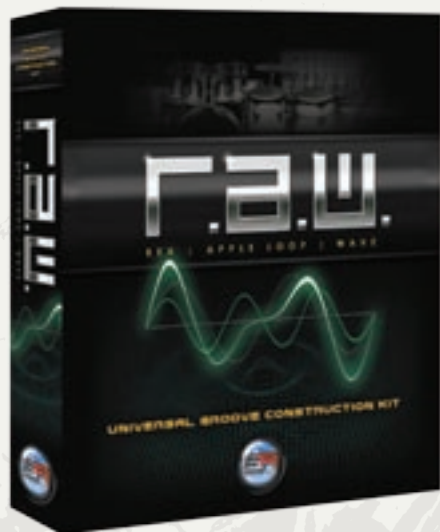
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Knob Creek

Alesis MultiMix 8 FireWire Mixer
MSRP: \$299; www.alesis.com

I love home recording and I love soft sequencers, but every so often I find my fingers itching to twiddle a real knob or two. Alesis has my back with the **MultiMix 8 FireWire**, a true eight-channel analog mixer combined with a 24-bit, 44.1/48kHz digital FireWire interface. Each channel has a dedicated three-band EQ, and while some of the 100 onboard effects sound a bit chintzy, there are plenty of acceptable presets to work with. The power supply is a beast, and the effects knob feels wobbly, but otherwise the dials are sturdy and the unit seems plenty roadworthy. Laptop jocks and DJs take note—the MultiMix is a perfect way to keep all of your digital *and* analog signals in one place, and, depending on your setup, can translate into one less booze-soaked piece of gear. *Roger Thomasson*



ATTENTION LOOP LIBRARY COMPLETISTS!

Reality Bytes

Sonic Reality R.A.W. Universal Groove Kit Sound Library
MSRP: \$249.95; www.sonicreality.com

Attention loop library completists! Sonic Reality's **R.A.W. Universal Groove Kit** amasses more loops than the Daytona 500, on four DVDs with 5000 drum and instrument sounds. R.A.W. stands for Rex, Apple Loops, and Acidized Wave—basically three versions of the same library. This means the collection can adapt to DAWs like GarageBand, Reason, Live, or Pro Tools—basically any system with a loop device. I tested the Rex and Apple Loops versions of the myriad drums, percussion, fills, ethnic instruments, guitars, and keyboards and was able to arrange a decent downtempo track in about 30 minutes. The 24-bit samples were loud and adjusted well to different BPM settings. The bare loops are fine for a quick construction kit, but you'll need to spice them up with your own creativity and effects. If inertia has got your music world stuck, throw in a R.A.W. loop and get out of the rut. *Tomas Palermo*



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Ableton Live 6 Power! The Comprehensive Guide
MSRP: \$36.99; www.courseptr.com

Ableton Live 6 Power! is a comprehensive guide that covers every aspect of Live 6, from setting up all of your preferences to detailing each parameter of every effect to editing and mixing entire tracks. The only drawback lies in just how detailed the chapters actually dive. Though it's crucial to explain how to import music files for DJing with Live, several pages on how to turn songs into iTunes may be a bit excessive. But for those who have made the move to Ableton already, this beyond-thorough book (which is also available as a CD-ROM; \$44.99) is the paramount resource for live performance, recording, and mixing, keeping novices and bedroom production pros at the top of their game—until version 7 comes out, of course. *Fred Miketa*



Mini-Pearl

Korg Mini-KP Effects Processor
MSRP: \$199; www.korgusa.com

Aw... isn't it cute? The youngest member of the Kaoss family is itty-bitty—an adorable 4" x 5", roughly. Despite its pint-size stature, the **Mini-KP** doesn't come up short on features. Sure, it doesn't have the sampler or colorful touchpad of its older brother, the KP3, but it still sports 100 effects ranging from pretty cool to completely awesome, and it still allows for exquisitely tactile sound-mangling. A tap tempo button cues up BPM effects, a hold button saves your position on the pad, and two memory buttons store program settings. The requisite X-Y touchpad has that groovy Kaoss feel and an FX release function creates a natural decay during program or finger changes. Battery operation, carrying strap, and a \$199 price tag make this little bugger look pretty appealing for those ready to put a little Kaoss into their live sets. *Roger Thomasson*



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VISION TEST

Creative Labs Zen Vision W

MSRP: \$299; www.creative.com

The iPod with video is nice and all, but the competition is starting to make it look bad. Creative Lab's **Zen Vision W** is strong proof, bundling everything you wish the iPod could do, along with a better screen and comparable price tag. While the Zen's 16:9 widescreen display is the most obvious improvement, pirates and DIY video nerds will love it because the device supports file formats like DivX, AVI, and XviD, meaning you can ditch all those stupid video converters. In addition, you can also listen to MP3s, FM radio, and view pictures via an integrated compact flash reader (oddly useful in travel situations). The Zen plays well with most televisions, making it a great front-end for video and music in the living room. Its only downside is that the interface is a bit clunky and awkward, making it better suited for tech-savvy users. *Brandon Ivers*

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE? CHECK.



ECHX-N-EFFECT

Altiverb 6 Reverb Plug-in

MSRP: \$595-\$995; www.audioease.com

Altiverb was the first—and widely considered the best—convolution reverb on the market. Most reverbs use algorithms to model reflections, but convolution technology uses actual samples of real, live acoustic spaces. And no, this ain't no marketing gimmick—the **Altiverb 6 Reverb Plug-in** sounds nothing short of spectacular. Sydney Opera House? Check. Cathedral Notre Dame? Check. Boeing 747 jumbo jet? Check. Audio Ease hosts these and hundreds of other downloadable "impulse responses" on their website. More are added weekly, and OSX users can even record their own. Other high points include full parameter automation and a slick, intuitive browser complete with panoramic movies of each space. In the unnecessary-but-awesome department, you can, with the press of a button, locate each sample on Google Earth. *Roger Thomasson*



LAUNCH PAD

AKAI MPD 24 MIDI Controller

MSRP: \$499; www.akai.com

Akai's latest attempt to facilitate the elusive boom-bap comes in the form of the **MPD 24**, a MIDI pad controller in the vein of M-Audio's Trigger Finger. 24 pads, six faders, nine knobs, and an army of buttons make it a much better-equipped tool than Akai's own MPD 16; the pads are more responsive as well, feeling more like those on AKAI's own MPC line. There are some limitations in the machine's ability to map its pads to different variables and the included sample library is bunk; that said, it has a solid feel, great screen, fresh industrial design, and generally brings the MPC-flavored heat. *Evan Shamoon*

CHUNKY, ANALOG, AND SO, SO TIGHT.



SO PHAT

Moog Little Phatty Stage Edition Synthesizer

MSRP: \$1375; www.moogmusic.com

Like any rare synth worth drooling over, the **Little Phatty Stage Edition** has already taken on idol status for collectors and producers hungry for the analog scent of any Moog product. Yet unlike enhanced recreations and software versions of synths, this little guy is handcrafted and sent directly from the synth masters themselves. Featuring auto-calibration and an auto-tune function, the Little Phatty is essentially guaranteed to stay in tune—under any harsh stage condition, for good. In addition, the Phatty comes equipped with an asymmetric pitch wheel, arbitrary pot mapping, and a MIDI in/out, allowing you to assign knobs for a full-on tonal and effect experience. Why, you'll be Rick Wakeman-ing in no time. It's a direct descendant of all of Moog's charms—chunky, analog, and so, so tight. *Fred Miketa*



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Photographie Miguel Legault

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VIS-ED: MARS-1

SPACING OUT WITH SAN FRANCISCO'S PREMIER SURREALIST.
WORDS JOSIAH HUGHES IMAGES MARS-1



Mario Martinez has been blowing minds as Mars-1 for a long time, from creating painting deep, spacey landscapes to envisioning otherworldly characters that he turns into toys with the help of his friends at STRANGEco.

With the money he saved from a paper route as a pre-teen, Martinez bought an airbrush gun and began developing his skills as a graffiti artist in Fresno, CA. “What I think is funny, and probably more common these days,” he says, “is that I learned how to render with a spray can before I learned how to paint with a brush.”

After honing his skills in that arena, Mars-1 attended the Academy of Art College in San Francisco,

where he learned to combine his earlier street techniques with controlled, classical training. He has since developed a style that addresses the dichotomy between science and self-expression; avoiding the pitfalls of contemporary trends, he opts to channel a higher level of consciousness, one strengthened by his intense imagination and attention to detail.

Amidst mad preparation for his first solo show in New York, *Aerodynamics for Psychonauts* (which ran March 31–April 28 at the Jonathan Levine Gallery), Martinez explained his creative process from conception to completion.

www.mars-1.com

ABOVE

Invisible Plan figure set

RIGHT

Mars-1 exclusive for *XLR8R* Vis-Ed: *Fuzzy Logic*, acrylic and gouache on panel, 31.5”x45.75”





How did you benefit from art school?
My art is in an unreal or surreal style. The San Francisco Academy of Art trained us in a classical style, which gave my “made up” imagery deeper dimensions and an understanding of what something may look like in an unearthly environment, as viewed through human eyes.

Your work is constantly compared to science fiction. Is that accurate?
I do have interest in science fiction, but my interests lie heavily in “UFOlogy,” theoretical physics, meditation, and the abstract nature of reality. Since a lot of these subjects inspire a lot of sci-fi, I believe it’s fair to compare my work to the sci-fi realm of the spectrum.

How much planning do you do before you start a piece?
I mostly just flip through my sketch book for elements to fire up some inspiration, or maybe start with splashing some paint down to see what ideas it may stir up. I try to keep the process free

and open to allow for chance changes and happy accidents, and to let some of the subconscious mind surface. After this point, things tend to slow down, with more tedious rendering taking place.

How do you know when it’s done?
I feel it’s important to evolve and to keep a flow of new ideas streaming in, being careful not to rely on past ideas. All the while, you need to keep improving in order to adapt to future situations. Hopefully, this will keep your work moving in a forward direction. Working in this way makes it easy to know when the piece is done—it simply tells me when it is complete. After projecting so much energy into the piece, it’s as if it says, “Enough already. I am finished, dude!”

What is your goal when you are starting a piece?
I consider all my work to be connected in some way. I would have to say I try to bring my “thought-forms” into our collective reality, and to contribute something positive back, no matter how small it may be. In this way, I show gratitude for all the amazing

LEFT
4th Dimension, acrylic and gouache on panel, 11.5”x11”

ABOVE
Ultraviolet Dreams (in progress)



inspirations others have shared with us on multiple levels—some of them subtle, almost invisible, yet they affect us every day. It's sometimes easy to forget how others before us changed our reality and how, after we are all long gone, we may affect the realities of others after us. I hope that was not too much of a stretch.

What do you do when you feel uninspired?

I take it as a sign it's probably a good time to get out of the studio, go outside, read a book, go for a walk with the dogs, or sit in a cafe drawing in my sketch book. Or maybe it's time to go visit a friend or a

fellow artist's workspace. Maybe it's time to discover new music I have never heard before; something with a lot of atmosphere helps. Every time I watch the film *Holy Mountain* by Alejandro Jodorowsky, it leaves me in a very creative mood. Mostly, I just try to change my surroundings. Too much stress can really lock up your creativity.

How did you first get into toys?

Well, the problem started as a child with pretty typical toys, like Star Wars, Transformers, Tron, and GI Joe. I think for a lot of kids at a young age, these toys really capture the imagination. For a lot of

creative people, toys like this tend to affect them in a deeper, heavier way. Some things never change—the toys stay the same, we just get bigger. So, it's no surprise that now I am very fortunate to be able to create toys of my own.

What do you listen to while you work?

AFX, Bola, Caravan, Clear Light, Country Joe & The Fish, Egg, The End, Growing Concern, High Tide, The Misunderstood, The Nice, Ratatat, Soft Machine, The Stooges, Syd Barrett, Television, Thomas Fehlmann, Vanilla Fudge, Tomorrow, Murcof, and on until the break of dawn...

What's your favorite work of art?

If I have to go with just one, it would be "Temptation of St. Anthony" by Salvador Dalí.

What bums you out?

People who see themselves as victims in every situation, instead of just fucking doing something about it to make it better. They would rather just put invisible roadblocks or obstacles in their way. There are people out there with real problems who have very positive attitudes and don't see themselves as victims. Then you've got your negative, jealous bastards (always nice to throw a few of them in). On that note, I can't remember where I heard this one, but I will never forget it: "Don't go away mad, just go away." [*Mötley Crüe, perhaps? – Ed.*]



ABOVE

Psychic Wars, acrylic and gouache on panel, 47.5"x23.5"

RIGHT

Mars-1, the first figures made by the artist

FAR RIGHT

Disconnect, mixed media on wood, 13"x17"



Words Max Herman
Pictured top A still from *Beyond Beats & Rhymes*
Pictured below Filmmaker Byron Hurt
(Photo by Shawn Escoffery)

BEYOND BEATS & RHYMES

AT THE RISK OF BEING OSTRACIZED, A FORMER STAR QUARTERBACK CONFRONTS HIP-HOP'S TABOO TOPICS.

For years, former Northeastern University quarterback Byron Hurt has been speaking to students and athletes about gender violence prevention. But as a filmmaker, this longtime hip-hop head has taken his activism a step further with a Sundance-approved documentary, *Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes*. Hyper-masculinity, misogyny, and homophobia in the music are all up for discussion, with everyone from Spelman College students to MCs like Fat Joe and Jadakiss weighing in. *XLR8R* caught up with Hurt to discuss how his film has sparked a new discourse.

In the film, you mention that watching music videos inspired the project.
Well, I had been thinking about making a film about hip-hop for years. I actually first came up with the idea in 1997 and I didn't really have the confidence or courage to pursue it then. I had several conversations with one of my colleagues, Jackson Katz. He had been encouraging me to make the film. Then one Saturday afternoon I had been sitting at home watching music videos, and I decided, "This is the time for me to do it."

What about those videos struck a nerve in you?
Just the fact that they were so formulaic and

that they all had the same reoccurring themes and images. It was almost like watching the same music video over and over again.

As a hip-hop head and former athlete, how did you overcome your insecurities about confronting these issues of hyper-masculinity and misogyny in hip-hop?
I just decided that if I didn't do it, somebody was gonna do it. You have to muster up the courage, and most of the people who I look up to and respect, they stand up in face of hostility or potential resistance. And to be quite honest with you, I haven't really seen any of the resistance that I thought that I may face.

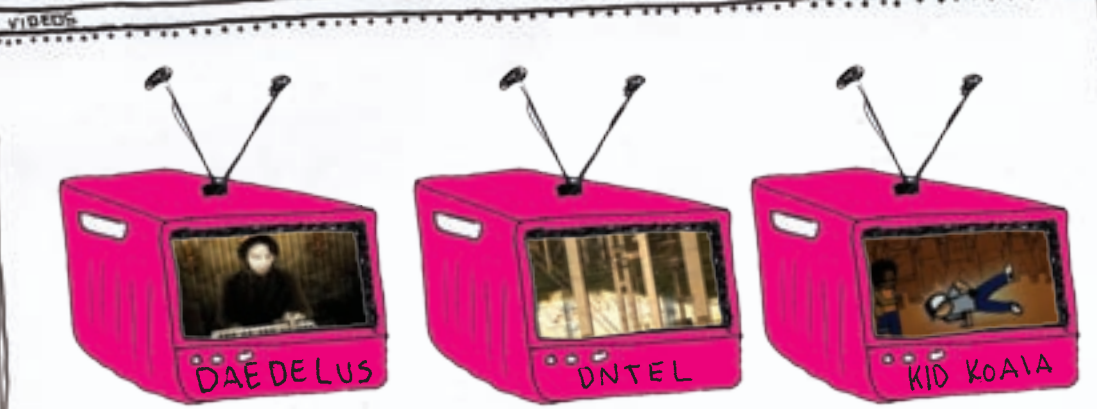
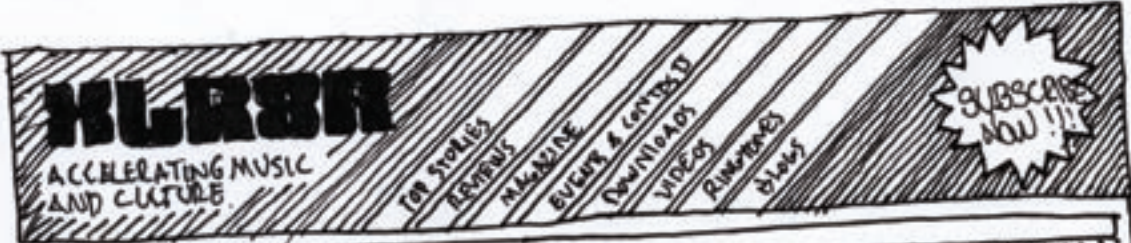
Sarah Jones and Jadakiss were very forthcoming in speaking to you. But Russell Simmons dodged the questions. Did you expect resistance?
I knew that everybody didn't want to have a conversation about misogyny and homophobia in hip-hop. I mean, people are more willing to talk about the violence and the hyper-aggression than they are the misogyny and the homophobia. In those two areas, people tend to be either defensive or don't really want to talk about it all, which I think is very interesting.

Has the film sparked a dialogue within the community, encouraging people to open up about these things?
I think the film is one tool to get that discussion going and it has gotten going. And I think Nas' *Hip-Hop Is Dead* also got people to talk about where hip-hop is right now. The actions that were taken by the Spelman women [not allowing Nelly to visit their campus if he wouldn't discuss their issues with his music] also contributed to forcing the discussion. I just think people are at a point where they're starting to reject a lot of what they're seeing and what they're hearing. The film landed at the right time.

Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes (God Bless the Child Productions) is out now on DVD. www.bhurt.com



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